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HOW CAN I PRAY?

A NEW INQUIRY BASED ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

BY THE VERY REV.

R. O. P. TAYLOR

M.A.

VICAR OF RINGWOOD,

LATE PROVOST OF CUMBRAE CATHEDRAL

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
INTRODUCTION		7
CHAPTER		
I.	"OUR"	21
II.	"FATHER"	36
III.	"WHICH ART IN HEAVEN"	46
IV.	"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"	56
V.	"THY KINGDOM COME"	69
VI.	"THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN	80
VII.	"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"	92
VIII.	"FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US"	102
IX.	"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL"	113
X.	THE LORD'S PRAYER AS A UNIT	120
XI.	THE LIFE OF PRAYER	128

The life of a great work of literature consists precisely in its faculty of " continuous adjustment to a changing environment." . . .

It has latent correspondences with human nature which time alone discovers ; it has the spontaneous activity, the unconscious self-adapting power of genius. The greater the genius of the writer the more responsive will the book be to its environment, the greater will be the area over which its relations extend, the more far-reaching, both in time and space, the range of its correspondences. . . .

What we have been saying is applicable in a unique sense to the Bible. . . . It is the one book which appears to have the capacity of eternal self-adjustment, of uninterrupted correspondence with an ever-shifting and ever-widening environment.

BUTCHER, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, pp. 186, 188.

HOW CAN I PRAY?

INTRODUCTION

I SHALL best indicate the character and contents of this book by giving some account of the way in which it has come into being. Ever since I found myself among those who use the forms of prayer which have been shaped by the long experience of Christendom, I had been struck with the number of times that the Lord's Prayer is used. It seemed as though it was felt that the Lord's Prayer could never be irrelevant to any mood or need, but was applicable to all states and conditions. When I came to study and use the forms of private prayer which form a kind of background to the more fixed and public forms, I found this same idea clearly expressed. For I remarked that in many cases, prayers composed in the freest manner, and expressing all kinds of longings and hopes, were followed by the Lord's Prayer, as though it came spontaneously to men's lips whenever the spirit of prayer rose to its highest. In an endeavour to pray more effectively and on a wider scale, I tried a great many of these little forms of prayer which concluded with the Lord's Prayer. But although I expected to find that the Lord's Prayer would turn out to be a better expression

of prayer than the words which lead up to it, and would put each particular desire into its proper relation with the whole field of spiritual life, it seemed to have nothing to do with what had just been said. It changed the tenor of my thoughts, instead of continuing the matter in hand and leading it to a higher conclusion. I came to feel, in fact, that this use of the Lord's Prayer was an irrelevance, a habit which had lost all meaning. Yet our Lord's command to use this prayer of His seemed to imply that it, or something like it, must always be used. That command, " After this manner therefore pray ye," weighed so heavily on my mind that I could not feel satisfied with the explanation or apology offered for the other types of prayer with which I was familiar—extemporary prayers and collects. I could not see that these were modelled on the Lord's Prayer. This latter mentioned quite a number of subjects which were not included in either the free or fixed types of prayer. Beautiful and useful as some of these were, they did not read like paraphrases of the Lord's Prayer. And in studying the collects of the Prayer Book, it seemed to me that their structure was quite different from that of the Lord's Prayer. They were fashioned after another pattern. For, taking a particular subject—say, an ideal of life—a collect first speaks of it as it is seen in God, and then puts the ideal in the form of a petition, asking that we may be enabled to rise to it through Christ our Lord. Nor has this plan been used in framing collects only. It underlies our most

unstudied prayers. The most freely composed prayers which I have ever heard were really based on it. This, then, has become the accepted type of Christian prayer. Why is it so different from the pattern originally laid down? The question seemed unanswerable for the time being, and I left it. But it served a purpose in driving me to examine the Lord's Prayer.

I could not get away from my first difficulty. I could not see how to apply the Lord's Prayer to certain subjects about which I felt bound to pray. For example, there were cases of sickness; in these much of the prayer seemed irrelevant. I began to wonder whether one was to confine himself to the topics explicitly mentioned in the Prayer. But I could not bring myself to think so. We are the agents of God in everything that we do, however little any particular action may seem to be. Everything which we handle is created and upheld by God, and therefore must be of interest to Him. It must, then, be lawful to speak to Him of the very least of our activities and interests. It is, indeed, needful to do so in order to remind ourselves of His share in them. And, after all, this Prayer is the Lord's own Prayer, His own instrument for the work of prayer, and it must, so it seemed to me, be adaptable to every department of that work. Had I failed to realise its capabilities and its adaptability? This seemed to be the probable solution. I therefore set to work to consider what had been taught and written on the subject, so far as it was accessible to me.

But I did not find it of any use. It was all exactly on the lines with which I was familiar, and did not give me any clue how to make the Prayer more widely applicable. I see no reason for incorporating this matter in this book, as it is already accessible in many forms. I shall therefore take it for granted. But I must make one or two criticisms. All the modern writings which I have seen are merely repetitions and echoes of an excellent little treatise written by St. Thomas Aquinas. He was a very great man, and I should count it an honour to be numbered among the least of his pupils. But I feel that theologians of all types inherit an inveterate habit of writing footnotes on footnotes on whole pedigrees of footnotes on his treatment of certain questions, instead of emulating his freedom of thought and willingness to face any question, however unusual or far off the beaten track of speculation. Christian theology has become too much of a game, to be played within boundaries which are carefully marked out, and under fixed rules which dictate the limits within which you must confine your exertions. Games are all very well, but they are not life with its disorder and immensity, or its need to get quickly to a goal and as quickly to find another further on. And with regard to the traditional treatment of the Lord's Prayer, I must beg leave to state an objection to which I shall have to recur again. The Prayer is always discussed as a rule of life rather than as a prayer. The question which writers answer is, " What therefore

must we do ? " and not, " How therefore shall I frame my thoughts when I pray ? " The former question is very important, but it does not cover the same ground as the second, which is the question that perplexed me.

It perplexed me all the more because I was dissatisfied for other reasons. My prayers, if they are worth my time, ought to produce definite and marked effects, both on those for whom I pray and on myself. But I found that they made little difference in me, and, so far as I could trace, less to those for whom I prayed. To put it baldly, I watched to see what were the results, and they were few or none. For the greater part, my prayers were not answered. I could always hazard a reason for this in any particular case. In fact, I accumulated a perfect battery of reasons why the answer to any particular prayer might be quite different from my thoughts or expectations, and therefore almost unrecognisable. But that did not conceal the fact that, in my hands, prayer was a failure. Something was wrong somewhere. I began to wonder whether I was praying in the right way. Perhaps there was something wrong with my methods. I decided therefore to try to find out how other people prayed, and to try various ways of praying until I found one which was really effective. I made up my mind to try experiments. But, in making that decision, and in adhering to it, I know that I came into collision with a prejudice which has sunk all the deeper because it is never thought out. We dislike the idea of trying experi-

ments in prayer. Is not prayer the spontaneous outpouring of the soul to God? Is not true prayer just a natural uprising of the spirit towards God? In this, as in so many other matters, is the difference between the ability of one person and the inability of another due to a difference of gifts? One has the gift, the other has it not, and there the difference must remain. And is not God certain to answer prayer, if only it is sincere? Various strands of thought are here entwined. Some of them can only be dealt with later on, but I will try to separate one or two of them and show that they are misunderstood and incomplete fragments of ideas.

It ought to be natural to pray; but prayer is a form of intercourse and it is not easy to be natural in intercourse, even with other men. One has only to look around to see how often a person desirous of having intercourse with others is hampered by some unperceived error of manner or thought. Prayer is a gift; so is the artistic faculty or the ability to play music. But these gifts are undeveloped and inoperative unless the person has some training. He may be trained unconsciously, to a certain extent, by being led by the example of others whom he sees or hears. But if he is to do much he must have a teacher to train him. Unless the examples and training are good, the drawing or painting is clumsy and does not give that power of self-expression, that free expansion of the mind, which it should provide. The pictures or the music which are

made will be unnatural and ineffective. And when an artist or a player finds that his self-expression is cramped, he has to search about until he finds a better way. He has to study the methods of others and put them to the test until he finds a way of overcoming his failure.

Another latent error lies in regarding prayer as a use of the power of God, differing in some essential way from our use of His other powers. I am assuming, of course, that all force is the power of God. He is the source of all energy. Now, the mastery over his physical surroundings which man possesses in these later days has been obtained by patient and systematic experiment. Man has studied to find out what he can do with the world of power, and, as the result of his studies and experiments, he has learnt how to become master of that world. There are, or were, persons who regard the experiments of science as being impious, and the hopes of the scientist as verging on the blasphemous. I cannot treat with these, because I am utterly unable to understand them. But I ask those who regard the methods of science as legitimate to reflect that the method in answer to which the power of God is made manifest and the ways of God made clear in physical things is probably meant as a suggestion of the habit of mind by which we can increase our knowledge and power in spiritual things. To those who already believe that the whole purpose of the external world is to afford a training-school for spiritual beings, in

which we learn how to handle matter simply as a preparation for handling spirit, my point will seem obvious. And although I have found that God's share in that joint activity which we call prayer is even greater than I supposed, yet I have also learnt that man's share is not unimportant. It may be only like the moving of a switch which unchains the mighty force that moves a giant ship on its cradle, but this is part of the arrangement made by the designer, and unless it is done, the great physical laws of God are not in a position to obtain the desired effect.

Perhaps I may be thought to be bringing together things which are essentially different. I think not. I am of Lightfoot's opinion that " the law of gravitation is as much an expression of the mind of Christ as any of His sayings." But perhaps we may meet on other ground. We all have gifts of mind and character by which we are meant to do God's work, and, indeed, become fellow workers with Him. Some men develop these powers by a kind of happy chance, which has really been a wise choice of models and an attention given to the subject, though perhaps for accidental reasons. But the better and more far-leading method is to train our faculties, first by experiments set to us by teachers, and then by experiment based on the methods and experience of others. The man who grows is the man who finds out things for himself, and there is no method which gives such certainty or opens so many doors as that of trial and error. Of course,

like the scientist, we take an idea as a guide, but we put it to the trial, and reject or modify it accordingly. Further, if I may again draw upon what has been borne in upon me by later experience, prayer includes a placing of oneself in the hands of God as an instrument—not a mechanical apparatus, but a living instrument, like a brain, which does its own part, and therefore has to find out how to do its own part. Prayer also includes the setting of oneself in a particular and close relation to man as well as to God, and we have to discover how to set up and to maintain that relation. Here, again, any failure ought to be regarded as a challenge to search out an improvement in our way of attacking the problem.

I had, as will be seen from what I have written, got away from the special problem of the Lord's Prayer to the general problem of prayer. I tried to find out from books and in conversations how other people prayed. My friends of my own generation confessed to the same feeling of futility and bewilderment which had been troubling me. I must say that this relieved my mind to a certain extent. For, knowing their characters to be high, I knew that this apparent failure could not be due to moral defects, such as might well be hindering me, although I was blind to them. But in trying to learn from an older generation and from the generations which had gone before, I found myself confronted by a difficulty which I could not overcome. They could tell what words they used, but no more. The

only question which they seemed able to understand was, " What do you pray ? " and not my question, " How do you pray ? " They seemed not to have required any such explanation. It was all natural and obvious to them. They just did it. And great results certainly flowed from it. There were certain points, however, at which I was able to take a hint. One of them was a piece of misunderstanding which may have been due to my own stupidity, though I prefer to think that it was due to their having stereotyped an expression till it ceased to express anything. I had noticed many references to " Ejaculatory Prayer " and knew them to be very brief and pointed phrases. I took it for granted that these were said occasionally, and when the mind happened to be properly attuned. But a little ray of light on the devotional life of St. Francis of Assisi showed him to be in the habit of spending hours in the repetition of a single brief phrase—I think that it was simply " My Lord," but it may have been a word or two longer. Acting on this hint I tried saying short phrases of prayer or worship over and over, and found it most useful. It enabled me to keep my mind to a single subject, as I never had done before. It helped me to continue in prayer when words failed me. It helped me to rise out of a prayerless frame of mind into a prayerful one. A few years ago I should have had to justify this practice against the charge of being mechanical. I should probably have rejoined that it is not so mechanical as listening to other people

praying. But the psychological knowledge of our day, especially as popularised by M. Coué, has rendered defence unnecessary. As, however, I shall have more to say on prayer of this type later, I can leave the subject for the moment and return to my immediate theme.

Generally speaking, then, books were silent on the matter about which I sought information, and my elders responded to my questions with a blank stare. There was a gulf between them and me which I could not bridge. The existence of that gulf puzzled me. What change had taken place which rendered me incapable of explaining myself to them? Why was it that they could not explain or describe their own habits to me? An explanation came into my mind which commends itself to me more and more. One element in the progress of the human race seems to be the replacing of instinct by deliberate and intelligent modes of action. What had been done automatically is now done by taking thought. Thus primitive man follows a track by means of an instinct which amazes us. We sometimes look on it with envy, forgetting that the vast apparatus of roads and maps and compasses and so forth, which we have substituted, is really far more effective. We seem to grope where he moved easily, but we are really freer, and can move over vast distances and immense obstacles, whereas he is confined within a very small range. He can do well in his limited patch of country, but the whole world is open

to us. Similarly, it would seem, we have been deprived of—or been allowed to lose—the instinctive capacity to pray, in order that we should be compelled to think out and search out ways of prayer for ourselves. We have to pass from unconscious to conscious action. The first steps are bound to be clumsy and embarrassed. The mind is sure to be at a loss at the beginning, and bewildered by the change from the known to the unknown. We are like creatures who have lost their wings and have to devise and learn to use flying machines. Like the pioneers of aviation, we shall have a weary and painful time. But hope is strong, necessity is stronger, and desperation is stronger still. In the meantime we are already making sufficient progress to warrant the belief that our travail will procure a lasting gain.

Impelled by my own responsibilities and needs, I set to work in two directions. I sought to learn and test various ideas which are being put forward. I refer especially to those advocated by the school of Mrs. Eddy, with which the names of Quimby and Rawson are so conspicuously associated. While I differed from much of their theology, I did not feel that their work as experimenters was really dependent on the value of their general ideas about religion or philosophy, and I have learnt a great deal by following their experimental methods. In this line of investigation, I owe a great deal of help to the writings of MM. Coué and Baudouin, and to the personal instruction of one of

their fellow workers, Dr. O'Flaherty, of St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh. The effects of these suggestions and of others which I have tried will be felt in the course of the book, and perhaps rather implied than stated.

But the second part of my work—which seems to me the more important, as it certainly gave me most trouble—was to set to work to discover the exact meaning of the words of the Lord's Prayer, and to detect and strip off the glosses which have become so intimately attached to the text that we do not realise their existence. I did this partly by scrutinising the text for myself, but mainly by endeavouring to apply the Prayer to all kinds of objects. It was a long and tedious process, but I was rewarded by finding that the Prayer, when released from arbitrary limitations, had an elasticity and an adaptability beyond my expectations. Furthermore, I was confirmed in my suspicion that success in prayer is, after all, largely a question of method.

I venture to ask the reader to put the suggestions which follow into practice and give them a thorough trial, because they are the product of years of struggle and travail—years during which I had to say sternly to myself that I must not rest until I could say, after careful watching, that my prayers were effectual in their working—effectual on others and on myself. As I have said, I had to compel myself steadily to face the fact that, as it was, my prayers made no difference. But because

I was enabled to keep the painful facts before me, and because I was placed where I had time and opportunity, and, besides, I am blessed, or cursed, with a mind which cannot take things for granted or refrain from scrutiny, I can venture to put forward these suggestions as having stood the test of long and searching trial. I proffer them with additional confidence because many others have tried them with great advantage, and I put them forth in the hope that others again may derive from them liberty to go forward and increase the knowledge and usefulness of us all.

CHAPTER I

"OUR"

I DO not propose to recount my conclusions in the order in which I arrived at them. As I find that all the changes in our methods of prayer to which I have been led embody themselves in the Lord's Prayer, I will take it clause by clause, and explain the use of each, so far as it has become clear to me. Perhaps I had better say once again that I do not intend to repeat what is already well-known, but merely to detail the additions which can be made to our common knowledge and the improvements which can be effected in our present methods.

I may seem to lay very great stress on the exact wording of the Prayer, but I feel bound to do so, not only because it is so very suggestive, but also because of the circumstances under which it was given. It was the custom for a Jewish rabbi, if he was in any way a leader of thought, to give to his disciples a prayer expressing and summing up his teaching. Nowadays such a teacher would probably explain his lesson in a book, which would set it out in a fixed and accessible form. But books were costly rarities in those days, and a short formula which could be clearly grasped, and learned by heart at once was used instead. It was

certainly a better plan to put it into the form of a prayer than that of a declaration against opponents, or even of a dogma addressed to the disciples' understanding. It is so dangerous to talk of God apart from God. St. John the Baptist, who was not only an outstanding rabbi, but also closely connected with Christ's position as an authoritative teacher, had composed such a form of prayer, which he had taught to his disciples. So when Christ's disciples found that he was leading them into a new way, they approached Him with the request that He also would state His rule of life and thought in the words of a prayer. Nor is it to be thought that precision of language would be unappreciated by His disciples because they were simple men. They belonged to a nation whose thought was all theological, and they had an exact and extensive knowledge of their Scriptures. Anyone who has heard Scottish working-men arguing about religion knows that such men can be very precise in their use of words. Our Lord must have seen the question coming, as it belonged to a regular stage in the instruction of pupils in religion. He would have prepared His answer. His wording, therefore, would be careful and deliberate. In so short a statement, every word would have a purpose.

We will take the words in their English order, as this is best suited to our habits of thought. We begin, then, with the word " Our." This single word " Our," set at a point where it gives initial shape, and being backed

up by the use of plural pronouns all through the Prayer, gives a social character to the whole. I remember reading a suggestion that it was useful to turn the Prayer into the singular number occasionally. I tried it, but the main result on my mind was to make me feel the difference. It has value as the prayer of an individual, but it made me feel that one's own life was a very narrow limit to be shut into, even when it was directed towards God. It made me feel self-centred, if not selfish. The moment I returned to the proper form, I felt the importance of " Our." It makes the Prayer a family prayer. If a son speaks to his father by himself and on his own account, he addresses him as " Father," possibly as " My Father," but certainly not as " Our Father." Only as speaking for the whole family and on family matters can he say " Our Father." To speak to God, then, in Christ's way, I must come as a spokesman for others. I must, at the very least, have thought of some persons with whom I am associating myself and whose representative I am. Even if I wish to put forward some need of my own, I may only do so by treating it as a common need, and praying, not for myself alone, but for a whole group of people.

I shall like to point out that this way of thinking emphasises a factor in human nature which is only now coming into its own, though it has long been talked of. We have just passed out of a period in which the most admired type of man was one who stood apart from his fellows. The great man of the nineteenth century

was accounted great because he was separate from the ordinary crowd, and often owed his fame to his opposition to the general attitude and instincts of the nation. He was valued for what he was in himself. His personal importance was its own justification. This, of course, expressed a truth which needed vindication—the importance of the individual and the necessity of the fullest possible development of personal life. But now when a man begins to come forward in public life, it is at once asked, "Whom does he represent? These opinions which he states and this policy which he advocates, sound very well, but what body of thinkers or what social force does he represent?" I may have more brains than the average member of Parliament, I may be as convinced of my right to mount a pedestal and lecture the whole of the nation as Carlyle or Ruskin was, but if I proposed to go and harangue the House of Commons, I should be entirely disqualified by the fact that I did not represent any constituency. This is, in some respects, a peculiar case, but it brings into prominence what is in all our minds when anyone addresses the public. On the other hand, thoughtful men are becoming disinclined to take up any attitude of authority, or even to speak publicly, unless they can feel that they are acting as the spokesmen of some definite section of society. The self-sufficient person is at a discount. The individual now realises that his true value lies in his use as the exponent and expression of a social group, and yet he realises that he must be

something more than a mere mouthpiece—he must be a vital factor in the group and powerful enough to carry it with him in a right direction.

This tendency, so far from indicating that we have come to despair of ourselves and think that individually we do not matter, shows that we are becoming conscious that the individual life does not have to preserve its vigour by resisting the claims of society. On the contrary, we feel that the next step in human progress is to find out how to develop the individual by enabling him to gather the life-power of others into himself, and expand himself into the lives of others. It is felt that service is the true and only mode of self-development. I certainly find for myself that since I transferred my prayers on to these lines, prayer has become more easy and natural, as well as producing deeper and more obvious results in those for whom I have to pray. I say " have to pray," not simply because I occupy an official position and have a responsibility for those with whom I am entrusted, but because the fact that one—anyone—is representative of others in a very intimate and far-reaching manner is brought home to us when we use this method of prayer. It gives one a sense of responsibility which compels one to act. I find that my life is so intertwined with those of other people that unless I keep struggling upwards towards God I am preventing their progress.

It is also to be noticed that a certain diffidence is effaced when we enter on prayer as representatives—or,

if you will, agents—for others, rather than on our own account. The faults of character, the lack of development, which make me feel unfit to appear before God, or even to attempt to penetrate into the spiritual world, must not be used by me as excuses for not doing my duty to others. Indeed, so far as these defects are shared by others, they impel me to prayer, for I can and do represent those who suffer from them. I can speak for the other sinners because I understand them. I am not bringing to the great Healer my peculiar defect, but exposing to him a diseased growth which extends through the natures of others. Thus the way of our Lord turns my temptations and my very sins into a duty of prayer, which leads me to their cure. But, in any case, my position is more important than my character, or rather my personal character is submerged in my character of spokesman. And we can be bold for others where we would not dare for ourselves.

Whom, then, do I represent? In the first place, those with whom I share my daily life. It is best to begin that remembrance of others which justifies the word "Our," with those who are most closely and permanently associated with me, the family or the friends who live with me. They are a part of me, and I of them. My thoughts and habits are being continually influenced by them, and theirs by me. They are my spiritual environment. While I perceive other people mainly as lay-figures, or physical bodies, I know the very hearts of these, and perceive their spirits.

Therefore I conclude that if I wish to catch sight of the spiritual world, to set my gaze on it, and to realise my position in it, I must begin by looking at these people in my mind and gathering them around me in my heart. But I ought not to state this simply as a deduction, or allow it to be considered as my natural tendency. I have found by experiment that this hint given by the word "Our" is correct, and that prayer is far less of an exertion when I begin by thinking of those whom I love as being associated with me, and, indeed, beside me.

This is not pious fancy. It is the perception of a real state of life. In the spiritual world the space which separates our bodies from one another does not exist. Distance in that life only arises from coldness or hostility, while love produces nearness and contact. A person's body may be touching mine and yet at that very moment he may be speaking in a distant manner, which does not mean that he is imitating a voice a mile off, but that his heart and mine are thrust asunder by anger or contempt. We say, and we say rightly, that we are in touch with a friend even when he is living out of our sight. I believe that that phrase, "In touch," which we use so instinctively, discloses the fact that we are in actual spiritual contact with those whom we love; and it scarcely needs pointing out that contact is made possible by nearness only. This is a matter of the heart, and we can trust the heart in its own world, just as we trust the eyes in theirs.

I should like to point to a fact of common experience which bears out what I have just said. You suddenly remember a friend of whom you have not thought for weeks, or even months. You feel that you must write to him, and by the next post, before he has had time to receive your letter, you get a letter from him. What has taken place? He has come so near to you in thought, probably during the writing of the letter, that he has impressed on your mind both himself and the idea of writing. He has put himself into touch with you. It is a pity that this kind of thing should be spoken of as action at a distance. Distance of body and distance of mind belong to two different spheres of life.

But still more than this is involved. Careful and long-continued observation has convinced me that there is a constant interplay of mood between persons who are in close touch with one another; I am not referring to what is transmitted by speech. If I am disturbed in my own mind, however careful I may be to suppress every sign of it, I soon see the unsettlement appearing in the words and actions of those around me. If I notice that someone whom I love is inclined to quarrel, and, refusing to allow myself to become irritated, keep my mind calm, they become calm too. Let me say again that I am thinking of what I have been able to do without a word or a sign. This is important as bringing out the extent to which mind affects mind, and therefore showing one great result

which is likely to follow the formation of a habit of associating others with us in our prayers. For it means that we not only breathe into them the spirit of prayer, but also every high thought, and aspiration towards God, which crosses our mind. Furthermore, it fans the flame of mutual love. I have found it keep affection alive and, indeed, increase it, in spite of long separations, during which no word or message passed. I have known it enable love to surmount long trains of those petty irritations which sometimes are caused by physical nearness.

So far, then, the formula for prayer is: "Think of those you love." But, of course, this thinking means loving. It is this which qualifies us for prayer and makes us capable of prayer. In no other temper are we fit to approach God. But this temper makes us like Him, makes us His children. We must be loving, if we are to pray, and I do not know any other way of being loving besides thinking of people that I love. If I am to be as loving as possible—and this would appear to be required—I must keep before my mind those whom I love most. I shall have to think of others later on whom it is not so easy to love, and I shall need the presence of these to keep me in the right frame of mind. Besides this, of course, those who love me most have a peculiar claim on my prayers. I always recognised this by putting their names first in my prayers. But it was a mere mention, and, being first, was soonest over. Now that I have come to keeping them beside

me all the time, I feel that I never really prayed for them before.

Now, having taken hold of those whose love will lift us into that atmosphere of love which is the kingdom of God, and sustain us there, let us consider whom we will take with us. First of all, let me point out a class of people to which our thoughts are led by our own needs and troubles. It would be idle and misleading to overlook the fact that our own troubles form a powerful incentive to prayer—perhaps the most powerful incentive we have at first. Our lives are in peril and clamour for help, and yet we are taught that the only way to procure safety for our lives is to lose them. The only way of keeping to the point is to think of someone else. We must think as definitely as possible of those who are in like case. We can put ourselves in touch with a whole army of sufferers and act as their representative. It may be that many of them do not know where to turn, but we know and must do it for them. If we know any of them personally we can put ourselves in touch with the whole class all the more easily. When, as is so often the case, our own suffering seems to cut us off from our neighbours and shut us into ourselves, this thought of others turns our prison walls into windows, through which we can look into the long wards of affliction, and our prison gate into a door through which we can pass into the hearts of others. The knowledge that we are acting for others takes away our depression and enables us to face our burden with

resolution. We dare not lose heart, lest we take the heart out of others. The bond of suffering is wonderfully close. We feel the weight of the pain of others choking our own pain, and, realising how sensitive a nerve is formed by sympathy, we try to suppress every dismal thought that arises, lest it flow into the hearts of others and sadden their lot. We do our best to keep in touch with God, so that His joy and health of mind may flow through us into them.

It is impossible to know the closeness of the relationship which is thus created except by actual experience. I can only say, in order to encourage others to try for themselves, that I have learned to know that one serves a great purpose. For when I draw some sufferer beside me in spirit and stand with him before God, I can give expression to what lies buried in his mind and thus allow his soul to pour itself through me and arrive at Him. We can thus act as the lips of the body of sufferers, speaking for the members who cannot speak for themselves and releasing the emotions which choked them. On the other hand, whatever emotion is aroused in oneself by the felt presence of God communicates itself to them in some degree. Whatever strength we gain from our contact with Him flows on, a very current of power, through all the chain of lives that we have drawn together to make the circle of prayer.

I have just spoken, with confidence, of the felt presence of God. I do not wish to imply any aspersion on methods advocated by others, but I must speak of

things as I have found them. Only by associating others with me in my attempts to pray can I come to any perception of the God to Whom I speak. Perhaps I may be allowed to relate the circumstances under which this was first brought home to me. For a considerable time I had to say Evensong day by day in church by myself, and I found it most unsatisfactory. It was neither prayer nor worship, but just reading something out of a book. However carefully I thought of the meaning of what I was saying, it brought me no consciousness of God. I was always troubled about the phrase in the closing prayer, " Who hast promised that where two or three are gathered together in Thy Name Thou wilt grant their requests." It seemed to me so obviously untrue, since I was all alone, that I took to dropping the clause out. After a time it occurred to me that the one difficulty might help to solve the other. The clause was, of course, a direct reminder of our Lord's words, " Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." On further consideration, I came to the conclusion that this saying is a definite direction as to the conditions under which He is to be found. Acting on this I tried the following plan. Before beginning the service I selected one or two of my friends to be my fellow worshippers and tried to think of them as being present beside me all through the service. I found that I became conscious of God and that my lower self simply disappeared, so that when I was aware of self

at all, it was a higher, aspiring self, and not the bitter, falling self. An even greater success came when I passed from thinking of them as standing round me while I took the service, and went on to say it as being one with them. As I uttered each sentence, I tried to think what it would mean on their lips. Then I came to feel that I was their mouthpiece, and then that they were speaking through me. So, step by step, I became more and more absorbed in them, till I learnt how to lose myself in them, or, it would be almost truer to say, to become the person for whom I prayed. This is most truly to carry out the command to lose self for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. It brings with it the fulfilment of the promise which is attached to that command, for a glow of life brings the consciousness of a self restored and transformed. Most wonderful of all, two apparently incompatible desires—the desire to escape from the limits of self, and the desire to retain one's own personality are both satisfied, and, indeed, help one another to find satisfaction. To look higher still, not only does the consciousness of God become greater, but the presence of Christ in the midst of the congregation of spirits, just as He promised, becomes vivid and precise. Last, but not least, one is conscious that his friends are being helped. Life is felt to be swelling up in them, enhancing all their powers, and triumphing over all their impediments. They stand, rejoicing, in the presence of God.

Perhaps I ought to be able to add that the recollection

of the advantages so gained and the happiness so found has, ever since, made the approach to prayer so attractive that I hasten to use every opportunity. But it would not be true to say so. No doubt this is largely due to that strange but common difficulty in believing that what has once taken place in the spiritual world can be relied on to recur with any certainty on another attempt. It is hard to get rid of the current belief that what is spiritual must be capricious, and realise that all the evidence points the other way. Partly also it is due to my own laziness. But I have come to see that there is another reason as well. It is impossible to break our connection with our family, our nation, and our race. Could anyone detach himself, his own recollections of prayer and desire for its elation would draw him back to the path. But since he is bound to all these people, he has, every time, to overcome the inertia of others, and to a certain extent modify their position. As he becomes more closely attached to those who live in the spirit this difficulty grows less. But it does not disappear, because many even of these are slow and hesitating. At first sight this is depressing. However, on fuller consideration, it takes on another colour. For although it is an impediment, it is an opportunity. These others may hang upon us as a dead weight, but we raise them whenever we rise. They may hamper us because they are ill adjusted to prayer, but every time we press them in the right direction we leave them a little better adjusted. And,

after all, they are not completely unresponsive or unwilling. We may take it that we are helping them in a way for which they have some desire, and if that desire be but feeble, the service which we render to them is all the greater and all the more grateful to their higher nature.

CHAPTER II

"FATHER"

"OUR," then, suggests the thought of our fellow-men. The next word, "Father," suggests the thought of God. Or, to be more exact, "Our" leads us to put ourselves into relation with men, while "Father" leads us to put ourselves into relation with God. Further, it names, and so defines, the relationship—that of a child to its father. We are not required to search through the spiritual world till we recognise God, and then relate ourselves to Him. We can start from the relationship. By assuming the mental attitude of a child, as we do when we say this one word with our whole heart, we turn and face Him; we set our consciousness at the precise point at which it is open to Him. As a mariner moves his ship until his compass is set in the right direction—a direction not determined by the sight of some distant object, but by a mark which is in the compass box itself—so we move our being until it is set along that clear and familiar line which "Father" denotes. We can only perceive God if we concentrate all our attention in that part of our organism which is most sensitive to Him, the side which is at once dependent and aspiring—the child-heart. Thus, and

thus alone, can we expect to feel His presence. He has thus been seen and known, as great numbers of men can bear witness. Still, it must be admitted, there are many who complain that they have tried to discern Him, but found no success. It may be that sin has caused some derangement of the spiritual organs. This, of course, can only be rectified by a slow process. But this did not seem to be the cause with those who have spoken to me of this failure. I do not feel that I am in a position to offer a solution which will meet all cases, but I can put forward some considerations which may help. We may not yet be capable of any large success, because we are not developed sufficiently. We are apt to expect to obtain clear impressions at the very beginning, and therefore to overlook the slight yet valuable effects which take place. The heart needs development and training as much as the ear or the eye. Anyone who studies music has to look where he is bid, and to look long, before the beauty and appeal of a great masterpiece are felt, and longer still before he catches sight of the spiritual world which it reveals. Again, failure may be due to looking for the wrong thing. We may easily be blinded by prepossessions. We are inclined to decide beforehand what the sensation which betrays contact with God ought to feel like, and, since our expectation is not fulfilled, to conclude that there has not been any perception of Him. For example, it may be thought that we should be struck immediately by His splendour and strangeness. This

is most unlikely, especially at the beginning. Vision does not spring to birth full-grown. And though the splendour be there, it is cut down to a mere glimmer by the feebleness of our sight. The utterly strange is utterly incomprehensible, and, if perceived at all, is likely to provoke the terror of the unknown, the worst of all terrors. No father would desire to make that impression on his child, for, besides frightening, it would destroy the feeling of sonship. Nothing prevents a child's getting to know his father so much as fear. There is, of course, and always must be, much in God that we cannot grasp or know, but we can begin only from something which we can recognise because it has a certain air of familiarity, and work onwards from that, always gaining more grasp and insight, though more and more aware of the great unexplored regions beyond our ken.

We begin, then, with this word " Father," which throws us into the attitude of childhood and lays us open to receive the impressions natural to a child, which are, of course, impressions of a kind already well known to us. And this often suffices. We become conscious of a responding heart, a nature which comes out to meet ours in the same way as that of our fathers after the flesh. We find and feel that we are talking to someone and not merely speaking into the air. And we know that this responding Being is God because It exactly corresponds to our knowledge of fatherhood as it makes itself felt on the heart of a child. Other sig-

nificant sensations add themselves as we grow more sensitive to Him, more trained to respond to Him and more capable of reading the meaning of these sensations. But I refrain from attempting to describe them, because they must vary to such a degree from person to person. Suffice it to say that each must notice for himself, and be always ready to observe what he has not noticed before.

This is the simplest way of taking it. But it is not always successful. Even where it does succeed, we may be hampered by self-consciousness. Perceiving the effect on ourselves, we may stay our attention on that, and lose sight of the cause. Or we may have drifted out of the relationship and lost the sense of sonship, in which case we find it difficult to resume. It is therefore necessary to seek further guidance on the problem. Let us return to the word " Father." " Father " is a family title. A father is a father only because of the existence of his family. Only in the midst of his family is his fatherhood displayed. If we would see him as a father, we must seek and see him among his children. Even there we see his fatherhood largely, or even mainly, in the reaction of the children to him, and the common life which he evokes in them. We read his fatherhood as much in the faces of his children as in his own. Now, it is obvious that, for the most part, the divine family is more easily visible to us than the Father can be. We apprehend them more easily, for we are dealing with more familiar material.

We have already formed a habit of putting ourselves into touch with them. This is especially true of those intimate friends whom we habitually summon in spirit to our side when we pray, thereby awakening the loving side of our nature and making it sensitive. These friends are the known, while He is the unknown, and we have to work our way from them to Him. Moreover, the traditional cast of our prayers reminds us that we have to find our way to Him through Jesus Christ. Now they are the Body of Christ—not the whole of it, but still the part nearest to us, the part surrounding us, the part most easily seen by us. When we thus gather them together in their spiritual combination, we are aware of a new, or at least a heightened factor in them. Since this is discovered when the family circle is assembled, we are at liberty to conclude that this factor is the Father Himself. This feeling that arises is to be watched and pursued, for it is a man's personal and peculiar perception of God. He must therefore mark it, and learn to regard it in its true character. Nevertheless, each time it occurs we must allow ourselves to be carried on and away by the sight till we forget that we are looking and we lose all sense of self in the contemplation of Him, obscure and difficult though that contemplation be. It must again be insisted on that we must not come to a stand in the luxury of feeling. This warning is all the more necessary when other things, such as a sense of exaltation or of power, are added. Since we are so prone to consider our emotions as ends

in themselves, or at least to allow them to turn our attention to ourselves, we must find an escape, by turning either to worship or to service—better still to both. We turn to worship by looking up through the power or exaltation to its source. We turn to service by setting our hearts in contact with the hearts of those with whom we are praying, so that the power which comes from God may pass through us into them. If we do so, it will continue to flow and we to be strengthened by it, but if it stops at ourselves it stops altogether. I must repeat, since self-centredness is so common a hindrance, that we need to drill ourselves into the recollection of our two refuges from self —the Father, and the Family in which He makes Himself felt. Only thus, as far as my experience goes, can we obtain that complete absorption in what we are looking at which is so characteristic of a child, and which alone keeps us open to the reception of every kind of knowledge which is possible to us. And, in any case, prayer is corrupted into mere self-seeking unless we are endeavouring either to give ourselves to God or to pass on to others the power of God.

We may now go on to consider some other indications of the nature of prayer which are afforded us by the word " Father." First, then, it defines the scope of prayer. For it implies that a child's conversation with its father is the model which prayer is to follow. A child instinctively appeals to its father in all its difficulties. But it does not limit itself to this. It tells him

all that is in its mind. It remarks on everything that interests it or catches its attention. It tells him much that he knows already, well knowing that he knows it. It takes pleasure in talking just for the sake of talking to him. It reiterates with joy sayings which have the charm of familiarity, which may be almost meaningless to others, but have become to them the embodiment of their love. Surveying all this, we see that a child's conversations with its father serve purposes which cast a good deal of light on the objects and results of prayer. The intercourse gives pleasure to the father, because it gives him such an opportunity of loving the child. Its heart is being fully laid open to him. Its infant soul flows out on the stream of words and thoughts to pour itself into his. Furthermore, it develops the child's nature. It brings about a growth of thought, which, paradoxically, is both spontaneous and yet guided. For it is always true, unless a person has grown rigid—and rigidity of mind is a kind of death—that even when a man is talking most freely he is being subtly and deeply affected by the person to whom he speaks. To work out the applicability of all this to prayer seems superfluous. I will therefore go on to point out one or two other reflections which suggest themselves. This development and improvement of self, like all self-improvement, is a duty to others because it is a help to others. The nearer we press to God, the higher we draw everyone who is bound to us by the cords of affection. The more our nature is moulded by contact

with His, the more easily is He able to use us as a means for conveying His power, especially in that unconscious ministry, or handing-on of the energy of God, which we call influence.

Having drawn attention to the way in which one type of conversation illustrates prayer, I should like to amplify the ideas which that will suggest by instancing another relationship in the formation of which conversation plays a great part. If we wish to make a friend of anyone, we seek some opportunity, and then every opportunity, of talking to him. We do not wait till we have something important to say, or till we have composed some form of address worthy of him; still less do we confine ourselves to giving him information. We probably begin by talking about the weather, about which he knows as much as we do. We certainly do not refrain from speaking to him until we want something from him. We should never attain to friendship or even knowledge along that road. And though we come to talk of more intimate matters, confiding to him all our hopes and fears, we still use the most trivial topics as subjects of conversation. All the while we are getting into closer and closer touch with him. We are gaining an increasing insight into his mind, and a growing ability to distinguish and appreciate every movement of his heart. We gain knowledge of him not only from what he says, but far more from the close contact with him which gives us real and intimate knowledge of him. If we have anything to ask now,

we ask it with confidence, and rather as affording him an opportunity of putting his love into action. Finally, we come to a stage at which we can do without speech, if need be or our heart be so disposed. Though we have nothing to say, or our thoughts are too deep or too vague for words, we still commune with one another—perhaps thus finding the deepest communion and the most complete unity of all. But whether with words or without words, we come to such a unity with the other person that we can lose ourselves in him and so achieve that escape from self which is at once the first demand of the Christian life and the crying need of our self-conscious age. Lastly, it is necessary to remark that we cannot know a friend completely unless we know him among his friends, revealing himself still more fully in his relationship to them. We cannot really share his life unless we share his friendships.

The ordinary course of our common life, then, teaches us the value of speech as a means of growing into fellowship and union with others. It is the means by which we get into practice the command to love one another. It is also the school in which we are taught how to learn to know and love God. Applying its lessons with a fearlessness born of experience, we become His friends, coming to Him on every possible occasion, and bringing not only ourselves, but also those who are united to us by the subtle and tenacious attraction which binds hearts to hearts in a coherent organism. Not only so, but we are enabled to do His

will under all conditions—where it might otherwise have been uncongenial, love makes it our desire ; where it might else have been in doubt, we shall know it by instinct ; where it demands an energy greater than our own, our love opens a door into the inmost springs of our nature through which He can come and charge us with His power.

CHAPTER III

"WHICH ART IN HEAVEN"

WE must begin by adjusting our use of this word "Heaven" to the Biblical standard. Two conceptions of Heaven contend for the possession of men's minds—that of a state and that of a place. Its dominant implication is either remoteness or happiness. So we get descriptions of Heaven such as "Above the bright blue sky," or "Jerusalem the Golden." Each of these may represent a truth or misrepresent it. But the lengthy descriptions of scenes of beauty which we have all heard are singularly unlike anything to be found in the New Testament—at all events in their emphasis. Take the Apocalypse. With the exception of certain highly symbolic pictures, which only occupy a small portion of the book, Heaven is described as a collection of people. Again, when our Lord speaks of His coming, with its disclosure of the next world, He does not speak of the sky opening to disclose the vista of a serene landscape in the distance, but of the coming of the Son of Man with His angels.

That, it seems to me, is obvious on a moment's reflection. I shall deal with its implications in a moment. But before I do so it is necessary to point out a change in language which disguises another

point. Nowadays we use the terms " Heaven " and " The Heavens " rather indiscriminately. When we make a distinction, we use " Heaven " for a higher level of the spiritual world, and " The Heavens " for a higher level of the physical world. The sky is referred to as " The Heavens " rather than as " Heaven." In neither case do we really feel the distinction between the singular and the plural. This is doubly unfortunate, since in the New Testament the singular " Heaven," is used of the sky, but the plural is only once so used (and that in a poetical quotation from the Old Testament). Avoiding too detailed a discussion, I will mention that the plural, " Heavens," carries a suggestion, and more than a suggestion, of grades of life, or, rather, of worlds of beings, rank above rank. The importance of all this depends on the enclosure—if I may so style it—of the first three petitions by the word " Heaven." It begins them and ends them. There is, however, a distinction in the prayer which is concealed. For the first " Heaven " is plural. It is Our Father which art in the Heavens. That implies, then, Who art manifest in all the grades of life, which rise higher and higher as far as the mind can reach. Beyond them lie other infinities. At these we can scarcely guess, but we do succeed in appreciating their existence by means of the realisation of the long, long stream of intelligences which stretches away so far above us, only to fall utterly short of the Mind of Minds.

I do not wish to lead the reader back into the idea of spatial distance, so I will put it in another way. Even in this world we know that there are around us men of deeper and richer natures than our own. And beyond its limits and deeper than its noblest are living beings, men emancipated by death, and intelligences which have never been confined by the narrow bounds which limit our mental horizon. As we rise among them by growth and knowledge, we feel a greater and greater revelation of God. And we dimly feel that there are lives deeper and richer than our dreams, which carry that manifestation further, but do not even begin to descry the fulness of the Life of God.

Now let us return to the point at which we had arrived. We have, by means of love, passed into that world of love where God is felt as the All-in-all of life. We ought to realise that we have passed into Heaven, for we are seeing our friends in the presence of God. We are aware of God, as we should know if we really grasped the meaning of "He that loveth knoweth God." These people, then, on whom our hearts are set are our Heaven; they are the bit of Heaven, or of the Heavens, that we can see. But we need to make sure that we are as deep into the Heavens as we can get, that our view is as complete as can be. We therefore need to bring in those whom we love most deeply. Whoever else we may be going to think of, we should always begin our prayer by surrounding our hearts with our nearest and dearest. Nor is this mere selfish-

ness or a use of them as mere tools. After all, we can render them no higher service than stimulating their consciousness of God, as we do when we thus add our weight to their tendency to turn towards Him. There is a profound truth, and even warning, in the saying, "Charity begins at home." Besides these, there are others who are closely connected with the thought of God in our minds. Chief among these are those Gospel personages who are so linked up with the history of our Lord's life. Through our long pondering on the Gospel story, some of these at least have become real to us, and we are accustomed to descry something of the light of God's presence in their faces. By thinking of them as standing near us and worshipping with us, we enter into the riches of the life of their society. We have joined ourselves and our beloved to another stretch of the Heavens, and got a further view of the God Who inhabits it. We need to bring them in not only to make our Heaven more complete, but also to suggest more definitely that Lord Who is the cause of our interest in them. Their relationship to Him is so great a part of them in our minds that they carry us a long way forward in the discovery for ourselves of the truth of the saying, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This idea, as I have said, ought to be in our minds from the very first, but I bring it forward again here, because this seems to me a point at which the idea becomes more explicit and needs pondering. For it

is by means of Him that the scale of life is carried right on, and we can catch some glimpse of that Majesty which fills all the Heavens, even that to which no created thing can attain—where there is that perfect society which is a perfect unity, Three in One and One in Three.

Through the Mystical Body we come to the Son, and through the Son we come to the Father.

I should like to point out that by working along these lines we get over a difficulty, which may be stated thus, Why do all our other prayers end with " through Jesus Christ our Lord," while this, the pattern prayer, does not ? The obvious answer is that this teaches us how to pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, and is indeed a prayer through Him. For, as we shall see later, these people, this company of which He is the Head and Bond, form a real body, a true organism with a great variety of members, and we, who are part of that same body, can use them to express our desires and aspirations with a fulness of which no single member is capable. So, since we are acting through His Body, which they are, we are acting through Him. Besides, as the obscure feelings of the least part of the human body is made clear in the brain and expressed by movements which may involve the whole frame, so, when we put ourselves into vital connection with this far more wonderful organism, Christ, Who is its brain, enables us to feel with greater definition, and uses the whole body to transform our vague aspirations into a definite and effective gesture of that whole system

which alone is capable of expressing the life of the spirit as it is in Him.

I must, however, cease this hopeless attempt to speak of a life as though we could view it from within and from without at the same time. So I will begin again from the ground of actual practice. We always have some people to pray for simply on the ground that we love them. We do not know of any pressing need of which we must speak. Or we may recognise that they need the help of God and yet be unable to define how that help can best be given. I am bound to say that, as life goes on and thought and experience, widen, I hesitate more and more to make definite petitions about particular people. I am not so sure as I used to be that I know what would be best for them. And what is definite is also limited! Having no lesser thing to do, I am reduced to doing the greatest thing of all, bringing them into Heaven, setting them in the midst of this complex of human life, which is continually thrilled by the inner presence of God, helping them to live in Christ, putting them into contact with God. If their spiritual life be dormant, I am stirring it into consciousness. Though it be vigorous and seems to have no need of me, I am converting my affection into an additional channel through which the flow of the Divine energy can charge them with power. I put my heart to its highest use by making it into a way for the passage of God, without narrowing that power to the dimension of any thought of mine.

Now let us take the case in which we have a definite desire or " Intention." Suppose we want to pray for friends who are sick. Three ideas have to be held in mind. They need to be brought to God for healing. They need to be brought into an atmosphere of health. We have to exercise care lest we make a wrong suggestion to them. I will take these in the reverse order. We are going to put ourselves into very close touch with them, thinking clearly and lovingly of them, so that our whole nature is bent on them, as indeed it must be if we are trying to help them all we can. If, then, we are thinking of them as sick, are picturing them as lying ill in bed or moving painfully about, we are suggesting sickness to them. We are augmenting their sense of weakness and so doing them positive harm.

To do otherwise is not easy, and is best managed by indirect means. We have got to get ourselves into an atmosphere of health which will so fill our minds that we shall suggest health and not sickness. Now, the people of whom we have already thought—this bit of Heaven into which we are looking—provides us with just the atmosphere which we need. We must then steep ourselves in it. That is to say, we must think steadily of them in their healthiness. We must look around in our mind's eye and notice this one moving gracefully and swiftly and that standing alert and vigorous. Then we can begin thinking of the spirits of our friends as being like them.

This is not easily done, and may take time. We may have to turn from him to them often and often, to refresh our minds and renew the right idea in ourselves. It is to efforts of this kind that, in my opinion, St. Paul alludes when he speaks of wrestling in prayer. For we are wrestling with something in our own minds and something in theirs. We are wrestling with ourselves and helping them to wrestle with themselves. We are striving to bring something to the surface. We are striving to get a fact realised. The part of them which is connected with the outer world has drawn sickness from it, but the part of them which is connected with that inner world catches the contagion of health from it. That innermost part of their nature which is in contact with Christ is healed by His touch. What we are trying to do is to make that part of them dominant, so that they will yield to the influence of God and not of a material world which is charged with disease and with what is worse, the terror of disease.

I should like to point out how this method of prayer eliminates a difficulty which may not occur frequently, but is nevertheless serious. We cannot always be sure that it is best that a sick person should recover. We all have to die some time or other. But the strengthening of the inner man and the increase of spiritual vigour are always desirable.

We now begin to see how this prayer can be used for all kinds of objects. This will, indeed, become more

and more evident as we go on, but it is important that the reader should continue to work at it now. For this translation of all needs into terms of the spiritual, heavenly life as it is going on now and as we are sharing in it is most useful. It not only winnows out our petitions, but drives us back to what is essential and fundamental. Let us take the case of someone who is out of work. For this object we have to think of Heaven as a place where everyone is active, everyone has full opportunities for his powers and everyone is full of the spirit which willingly seizes on every opportunity. We are thus bringing our client into an atmosphere which will overcome that lassitude which is so apt to lay hold on those who have to stand idle, and acts as a barrier to all resolute effort to make a way out of their unfortunate position.

Furthermore, we are associating them with persons who are always on the watch for opportunities of action, and in this way we are helping to keep their minds open to any chance of activity which may occur. This would all be true even if we were not engaged in prayer, *i.e.*, were not bringing their spirits under the influence of God. But it all helps to show how that influence acts. For, thinking of the ceaseless service of those whose lives are more completely dominated by God, we come to feel that He Himself is a Being of tireless energy and will make them like Himself. We must feel this as clearly as we can, because prayer, like any other form of activity, is hampered by lack of intelligence,

and—let me say it again—lest we thwart our own prayers and desires by exerting the pressure of suggestion in a wrong direction.

I do not want to produce the impression that this subject is exhausted. Still less do I desire to do the reader's thinking for him. I will therefore suggest that, as a beginning, he should consider how he would prepare the ground if he was going to pray for someone in a state of depression, or one who was quarrelsome, or one who had given up prayer. The special needs of our friends will provide us with plenty of other suggestions.

CHAPTER IV

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME"

WE say "Hallowed be Thy Name," but what we really mean is "May we hallow Thy Name," which is something less than the words imply. The verb is passive and leaves open the question who is the agent, whether ourselves or God. If you think out the meaning of the words "May we hallow Thy Name," they scarcely seem to form a prayer. I think that they can be justified, but I want the reader to notice that they stand in need of explanation, at all events in a prayer. For they are not asking God to do anything, but asking Him that we may do something. We have often heard this type of exposition, and, through force of habit, think that it sounds all right till we examine what we are saying. It cannot mean that we ask for permission to hallow His Name, though that would be the most obvious interpretation. It might be construed to mean, "May we be enabled to hallow Thy Name," but, if so, "Hallowed be Thy Name" is a curious and roundabout way of putting it. Put in their ordinary English order, the actual words of the Prayer would read, "May Thy Name be hallowed." There they stop, and the question "By whom?" is left open.

We shall leave it so for the moment, and consider the word "hallowed." It means, of course, made holy. That is the familiar kind of explanation which does not explain at all. What does the word "holy" mean? There are two stages in its history, and we had better take them separately. During the first stage it expresses a human action, that of setting something apart for the purposes of religion, of keeping something from defilement. With ourselves, the word at this stage may be used in the sense of "respected" or "revered," and we may develop the idea of "make holy" (or at least "keep holy") to include appreciating God properly, valuing Him rightly, and even giving Him His opportunity. As I have said, all this has to do with our own action, not God's. I think, however, that it may be taken to imply a prayer that we may be given the necessary mental and moral power to do these things. And I think that it can be justified further. For it is necessary that we should remind ourselves that we have to back up our prayers with actions. Besides, since we have broadened the scope of prayer in thinking of the word "Father," so as to make it as wide as the word "conversation," it is only right and natural to talk to God about a matter which concerns Him so directly as the resolve to regard Him as He ought to be regarded. The vow is a well-recognised form of prayer, and has not only the value of bringing our own will into play, but also of expressing our reliance on Him (thus, incidentally, giving ourselves confidence) and adjusting

our relation to Him. And to be in the right relation to Him is to be in harmony with all the forces of life, so that all help us and none hinder us.

All this seems to me to have value and to justify the current use of the phrase, but not sufficiently to satisfy. I go on, therefore, to the second stage of the meaning of the word " holy." The best definition of this which I have seen is : " Holy is the adjective corresponding to the noun ' God.' " " Holiness " is an abstract term for the concrete " God." A man can only be said to be holy if God be in him. We get the combination of the two stages in the hallowing of Solomon's Temple. It was solemnly and deliberately set apart for the worship of God by the king and the nation. But this was only a preparation for the coming of the splendour which filled the Temple and showed that God had come to take possession of it, or, as we should perhaps prefer to say, made Himself felt in it. With this further meaning in mind we can see how the clause, " Hallowed be Thy Name," can be taken as a request. We are asking Him to hallow—to come, to dominate—and this follows naturally on what the Prayer has already led us to do. For we have felt God in Heaven and there seen how He fills men with His divine life and power, how he inhabits them, heightening all their capabilities. And now we ask that He will carry this a stage further that He will similarly permeate and intensify this earthly life by putting into it His strength and rightness and beauty.

Without going any deeper into the meaning of the clause, we are furnished with a prayer which will appeal to us. We want the Name of God to have power over us, to strengthen, to control, to evoke affection. Already it does so to a certain extent, in consequence of our own thoughts and efforts. It counts for something, but yet not enough in our own minds, let alone the minds of humanity at large—and the Prayer must not only be for ourselves, but for all the children of the Father. I cannot say that the name of God moves me as do the names of the human beings whom I love. And we find the same to be true of others when we look around us.

To go no further than our own nation, it cannot be said that it responds to the Name of God as it does to the names of our popular idols—a familiar phrase which embodies a terrible significance. Why is the result of tradition, of the efforts of so many teachers and thinkers, so small? To come back to ourselves—in spite of all our thought and prayer, His Name has little power to move us. At all events, when we compare out efforts to give His Name its due weight with the result, the latter seems rather disappointing. And when we call to mind how it has been the name of The Beloved to so many men, and strengthened and stayed them, we feel that we have lost something. Think of the Cavalier who waited so calmly through the otherwise interminable hours which preceded his execution, delivered from all fear and rancour by the

ceaseless repetition of the Sacred Name. May it not be that we have first taken for granted and then forgotten the part that God can play? Perhaps nothing but such a void in our religious life could ever have compelled us to think about what He can do, and to notice what He does. And even were He to persist in doing it, unnoticed, would He not be hampered by the lack of our comprehension. Unless we shape ourselves aright by thought and desire, we are bound to obstruct His way and block His action. So, then, we are bidden to ask God to make His Name a living force in our minds.

There is still, however, more to be said. Though this word " Name " is familiar enough, its implications need study. I will try to suggest some ways in which these implications can be worked out so as to make the clause more suggestive and more elastic. We must, of course, think of names as having a meaning and not being mere labels, like our own names, which are usually chosen out of pure caprice and have lost all trace of meaning. Perhaps it will be as well to consider first the names which scientists give to things. Looking at their practice and that of others similarly engaged, we see that the names make their objects identifiable. What has once been identified and named is made more easily noticeable. Where it is possible, the name given has a meaning, and tells something about the nature of the thing or its relation to others. Thus, naming the thing helps to make it intelligible. But though the

nomenclature of a science has its interest, it is useless by itself. The names are only valuable to a man when he has learnt to attach them to their proper objects. Thus, if a person were to master the most exhaustive geological tables and did not learn to identify the rocks and fossils to which they are attached, he would have no real knowledge of geology. If such a person attempts field work or even a discussion of some point in the science it will be a mere farce. But to know the labels without attaching them to facts constitutes a tragedy in religion, and yet it is very common to-day. Of the millions in our country who are familiar with the Name of God, how few of them attach it or dream of attaching it to anything that they come across in their own experience? Having limited the term "God" to some sort of remote Being living in surroundings quite unlike our own, they do not know Him when He stirs in their own hearts or shows Himself in the love of a friend or the affection of a child. It must remain true to a large extent that the cure for this depends largely on the way in which we teach one another, yet, considering the greatness of the need, we may well be thankful for a prayer which asks God to make His manifestations of Himself known for what they are. Take the trouble in a form in which we encounter it in our prayers. We pray to Him to help someone, and that help is given—probably, as is God's way, through human agents. The person fails to recognise the real source of the help and, in consequence, not only misses an opportunity of

seeing the hand of God or even of knowing Him, but also fails to learn where he can turn when he himself is anxious to gain help for others. Human life is full of God, but He is nameless and unknown to so many. Some change, I know not what, is needed to enable the many men who try to walk by and rise to whatever is highest, who try to respond to the inward voice of conscience and duty, to recognise that truth and duty and the rest are but abstractions from the living God, and that it is His voice and His inspiration which spurs them on. All our persuasion is rendered futile by the fact that it is a talking about God, an attempt to convey knowledge about God. Knowledge, personal knowledge *of* God, and not about God, is what they need and what they have, if they would only put the right Name to it. How to bring this about passes man's wit ; it can only, it seems to me, be wrought by God, and to Him we must appeal. I imagine that He holds His hand till there is a desire for it—the self-restraint of God and the modesty of God are amazing—and we have to start that desire, to set it to work in our own minds, so that it may spread to the minds of others.

I am led on to say a little about the use of personal names in olden days, especially as found in the Bible. In those days names described their bearers and could be looked on as expressing their characters. Thus we have Naomi, when all her life was turned to sorrow, saying, " Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me

Marah" (bitter). The development of the Names of God in the Old Testament, as He revealed Himself and became better understood, is well known. As I have already suggested, terms such as "truth," "beauty" and "love" ought, through experience, to be hallowed on our part as Names of God, as we see Him hallowing them by showing Himself in the experiences which they describe. But even to do this we must remember that God does not express Himself by means of words only, or even mainly. He is continually expressing Himself through all kinds of mediums, and we need a great development of that in tinct by which we can recognise Him. His most adequate means, outside the movements of our own hearts, is men and women. Human nature is what we best understand, and He has made it extraordinarily capable of expressing Himself. God has been defined, *i.e.*, made clear and recognisable, for me by certain people whom I have known. They told me far more about Him than they ever said. Looking at them, I caught a glimpse of Him in a definite form which I could grasp. I knew and caught hold of the hem of His robe at least. Every noble soul is a statement of God, as far as it goes. Among all these living names or definitions, the most important and far the most adequate is God's expression of Himself in Him Who is styled the Word, Jesus Christ. We allow that He is amongst us. We have been taught that He is in us. But for most of us these statements are meaningless words. Virtue must so flow out from Him that

our attention is caught, and He is recognised. We have imagined that the proclamation of Christ depended entirely on us. So, without meaning it, we have implied that God and Christ were absentees. Hence, as it seems to me, has arisen our extensive failures. But the moment we recognise the fact, we see the remedy. Room must be made for Him to do for Himself what we cannot do. And room will be made by the desire which issues in prayer. We cannot feel God unless He makes Himself felt. He cannot make Himself felt unless we are attentive and understanding. We need to watch everywhere for Him; we also need that, in all things, circumstances, and people with which we are surrounded, His action and presence may take such a form that we may be able to recognise it and Him. Perhaps we need to emphasise our share in the process, so as to keep ourselves up to it and to avoid frustrating Him. Therefore I may point out as examples that what we call the "atmosphere" of a church or of the mountains is a name by which God is proclaiming Himself and is to be studied in that light. It is a fact of experience that when we do so study it He intensifies it, and thus we actually perceive Him hallowing His Name. We may, then, further paraphrase the clause as: "Express Thy nature. Be no longer to us a fleeting influence, but a Being, present, known and named."

I feel that in attempting to couple up this phrase with our own usages and habits of thought, I am rather beginning a study than presenting a complete statement

or solution. I will, therefore, add some further ideas which must, I think, have a bearing, though I may not work out their application fully. In Biblical use the word "Name" almost comes to mean the person himself, *e.g.*, "I will put My Name there." With us, as we have already noticed, it seems little more than an arbitrary label, the only use of which is to distinguish one person from another. But it still has a greater force than that. For example: when one person is introduced to another, *i.e.*, is admitted to his society, there is a kind of solemn handing over of each person's name to the other. They may know each other's name perfectly well, but this ceremony has to be gone through. Then, because of this presentation of one man's name to the other, he has the right to address him whenever he meets him, and the other person is bound to acknowledge it and respond. Let us take a case where this goes further. A boy sees a girl for whom he conceives a great admiration. He has first to find a way of getting introduced to her. He is thus enabled to speak to her, and to use the name or, rather, title (Miss ——) which was used at the introduction. But a far closer relationship is indicated when she allows him to use the same name by which her family address her. In giving him the use of her name she has given him herself to a certain extent. Then, supposing they are married, he gives her, and she takes his surname, and she then represents him and acts by his warrant. But all this, from first to last,

depends on each person empowering the use of his name. This takes us on to another class of cases. I may know a man's name quite well, but I can make no use of it until he says to me, " You may use my name." Suppose, for instance, I want to inspect some house where he is well known. I should not be admitted otherwise, but when I say that he gave me permission to use his name, then I am admitted. In this change of the value of the name to me I think there is an illustration of one meaning which " Hallowed be Thy Name " bears. My spiritual adversaries are weakened and my difficulties lessened when He enables me to use His Name and say, " In the Name of God I can face and overcome you." I do not know whether it is actually the case, but it is popularly believed that one is not bound to assist a member of the police force unless he calls on him to do so in the name of the King. And he cannot do so without the King's warrant. Supposing, then, one is calling on others to do or accept something, it will make all the difference if God backs up the use of His Name. It is obvious, then, how this clause can be used when we are praying for a preacher, or, indeed, for anyone who is trying to do the will of God, for all such are acting in His Name.

I think, also, that we should do well to ponder the change which comes over a name as a friendship comes into being and grows. " John " or " Mary," or whatever it may be, has been familiar enough in our ears before, but now it becomes the centre round which the

revelation of a character gathers. So in course of time the mention of the names even casually by a mere stranger arouses our attention. It seems somehow to embody them. We come again, therefore, to the idea of God's making His Name have power over us, but now with the added thought that He shall do so by making Himself known to us. And this leads me to point out another sphere in which the clause indicates the way out of a difficulty. In these confused days there are many who reject God with their minds and accept Him in their spirits. They tell us that they are not Christians, but their actions betray the fact that Christ is their inspiration. He is there, acting in and on them, but they are unaware that it is He. His Name is attached to some idea which they dislike instead of to Himself. It is hard to see how any of us can get them to join the Name and the influence, so unfortunately dissociated. A movement is needed in those hidden depths of the spirit to which He alone knows the way. Our arguments only impinge on the surface, and too often raise waves which further conceal the depths. Yet we know that we are bound to help and have been given a part to play. We are therefore driven back on prayer, and here is the very prayer we need. It may be that our thoughts have been wrong. We may have been thinking of the vindication of our own position, or secretly moved by the desire to get our own way, or we may have other wrong thoughts which are affecting them, as all our thoughts do. If

so, nothing but contact with God in prayer will put us right and prevent our continuing to hinder. But whether this be so or not, their great need is the gift of understanding, which can only be given from within. Therefore, so far as we can help at all, it must be by approaching them on the inner side, as we do in prayer. The main thing is the continuance of the work which has already been begun in them by God. They can only become more docile to that by a change in the mental atmosphere by which they are surrounded, and our best way of getting at that is by prayer, especially as—for I must repeat this again—it is probable that our own influence is not quite what it should be. The thought of God's work may be so belittled in our own mind that we are really a hindrance. In any case, they must see for themselves, they must accept as free agents, and only God can enable them to do that. Therefore, apart from prayer, it is often our wisest policy to let well alone, lest we arouse the very reaction which we desire to see die down.

CHAPTER V

"THY KINGDOM COME"

IN my endeavour to apply the Lord's Prayer to all kinds of subjects, I started off with the idea that the meaning of this clause was, in essence, "May we obey Thy Laws." My teachers had always treated this as the practical outcome of the wish expressed, and such it is in truth; for until I obey those laws God is not really and entirely my King. And it is true, in a way, to say that the Kingdom of God can only be set up as men become obedient to Him. If we were considering the Lord's Prayer as a rule of life, we might confine ourselves to this usage. But even then we should have to take some regard to the fact that the Kingdom of Heaven is already in existence. The Kingdom is Kingdom Come not in the sense that it has yet to come into existence, but because it is coming towards us. To use a homely example: if a man tells me that he is waiting for a tram which is coming, I am not led to suppose that the tramcar is designed but not made—otherwise he would have some time to wait! Further, as I have had occasion to point out in speaking of the preceding clause, we are not dealing with a pious aspiration, but with a prayer, and that prayer is that the Kingdom may come, not that it may

be set up—still less that we should set it up. Now, when we use the word " Kingdom " we waver in our minds between two meanings—that which is ruled and the office of the ruler, *i.e.*, between kingdom and kingship. In either case it forms a true prayer, since we are appealing to Him who is its inspiring power to move it. But we could not say, " Thy Kingship come " —or at least it seems so to me—if long custom had not trained us to read that meaning into " Thy Kingdom come." Paraphrase it a little further, and you get " Thy Rule come," which is an unnatural expression. And if we go back to what is certainly in our minds, " May obedience to Thy Rule come " is worse, though it is not quite so bad if we put it, " May obedience to Thy Laws come about." But, after all, laws do not constitute a kingdom, and a system of government, considered by itself, is only an abstraction. And we have slipped into a curious and fatal way of thinking of abstractions as realities. They are not ; they are abstracted and taken away from reality. The only realities in the spiritual world are persons.

This prayer was taught to simple people, and was intended to be the prayer of simple people for all time. Let us try to clear our minds of sophistication by looking at the ordinary and natural use of the word. The obvious parallel to " the Kingdom of Heaven " is such a phrase as " the Kingdom of England," and to " the Kingdom of God " " the Kingdom of King George." Now, though the former, the Kingdom of

England, suggests a place (just as Heaven does to many), when we put the phrase " the Kingdom of George " beside it we see that it really means a certain set of people who are combined into a society by having a king in common. So, in speaking of our own King and his kingdom, we think of people scattered all over the world. Some of them are isolated in distant places, *e.g.*, an embassy in the capital of a foreign country is regarded by all as part of his kingdom. Again, if the people remained the same, and the laws remained the same, but we changed the Government to a republic, even though we paid the greatest deference to the moral ideals of George, the Kingdom of George would have ceased to exist. We see, therefore, that in using this word " Kingdom " we are dealing with the same society to which we were brought up in thinking of Heaven. The clauses arise naturally out of one another. The Prayer is continuous, and not a string of disconnected ideas. We still go on using the group of people which we have gathered round us.

But how ? It will help to show the way and to make the subject clearer if we consider one or two more examples of the use of the word " Kingdom." At the beginning of the Great War the Belgians asked the Kingdom of Great Britain to come to their assistance. If we had acted on the ideas which are usually suggested in explaining this Prayer, we should have sent them a copy of the Laws of England and a book of English etiquette and said, " Adopt these rules of life and the

Kingdom of Great Britain will have come to you." We did some stupid things, but we never descended to that level. We sent ships and an army. And if we focus the event into one scene, we can imagine the Belgians saying, as the flotilla came in sight, " Here is the Kingdom of Great Britain coming to our aid."

Or again : Imagine a settler in America, who had gone a distance ahead of the main body of colonists. He was living in incessant danger. His homestead was a little fortress, which he himself had to defend. Whenever he was away from his home, he was racked with anxiety lest those whom he had left behind should fall victims to a cruel and sleepless enemy. He had to rely on himself and himself alone against all dangers. We can imagine with what anxiety and hope he would watch the kingdom of that earlier George coming nearer. The tide of settlers, as it approached, would bring him confidence and support. The enemy would become less audacious. And so it would go on, till the kingdom actually, formally and officially reached and took charge of him. This might be even in the unattractive personality of a tax-collector, but, whatever official it might be, his advent marked the fact that the kingdom had come, and that henceforth its protecting arm would always be over him.

It is to be remembered that the people among whom our Lord taught were looking for the coming of the kingdom in just such a form as we have been thinking of. They expected to see it in the shape of an invincible

host headed by the Messiah. The only correction that He made was to insist that it would be an inward and spiritual event. Otherwise he speaks of its appearance consisting of the coming of the Son of Man with His angels—in the clouds of heaven, it is true, but nevertheless really coming.

But He did not teach them to regard the Kingdom as having still a great distance to come. The Baptist had proclaimed that it was near at hand. That might be taken as meaning near in point of time—which was true as far as it went. But our Lord taught that it was near in the sense of almost come to the surface. In such parables as the Leaven, he speaks of it as something working at the basis of the visible world, so that, though it does not appear itself, its effects do. And the great saying, " The Kingdom of God is among " or " in you," combines a two-fold suggestion, that we can find the Kingdom by penetrating beneath the surface of society or by looking inwards into the world in which our own spirits already live.

We come naturally back to the world at which we were led to look in the preceding clause of the prayer. That is the Kingdom, with the King in its midst. In it the state of things which we desire is already achieved. We now pray—and by our prayers make a way for it to come to pass—that that Kingdom, already so close to us, may come nearer. The result will be that it will exert a greater pressure. The altered inward nature of the persons for whom we pray will exert more force on

their outward nature. The atmosphere of that spiritual world will exercise its influence on them still more strongly, and counteract the disproportionate weight which the outer world exerts on them.

It will help to make the subject clearer if we consider some actual examples. Take the case of sick persons. We have thought of the world around God, the Kingdom around the King, in which everyone moves and acts in perfect vigour, and we have thought of the spirits of our friends as they are in that world, full of life and energy. We have asked God to send that power down and make it known as His own. We now ask that, by that power, the Kingdom may press so close on those for whom we pray that it may be felt by them. The result would be that a state of healthy-mindedness would be brought about. This might have the result of overcoming bodily infirmity. Even if it had not, it would help to keep their spirits untroubled and to deliver them from that lowering of the spiritual and moral tone which sickness is apt to produce. May I protest, in passing, against the idea, often propounded by people who want others to be religious, and also by people who want to put off religion, that a sick-bed is a kind of retreat house ? It is not. Sickness makes the body press down the soul ; it makes prayer difficult, it makes patience difficult, and it is a direct incentive to selfishness. An increase of spiritual influence tends to lessen that. But it does more. I remember a girl who had just passed through a severe illness. She

ought, as her doctor told me, to have been recovering rapidly. But unfortunately her friends and relations were coming continually to her bedside and saying, "Poor thing! How bad she looks! She cannot last long." The doctor was thoroughly alarmed, and we set to work and had her removed to a home where she was surrounded by people who, believing the doctor, expected her to recover, and did all they could to cheer her up. The consequence was that she recovered and recovered rapidly. Such is the effect of an atmosphere which can be felt, and the drawing near of the Kingdom brings an atmosphere of hope and confidence which is bound to help.

But this clause, as applied to a sick person, includes still more. In the Kingdom of God are included all the ministers of God, ministers to the body as well as to the soul. The clause therefore implies the coming of these ministers, doctors, nurses, helpers, to whatever extent may be needful, the hosts of the Lord converging on the spot where they are needed.

This consideration applies with particular force when we are praying for those who are lonely. They need friends. They need to get into a social atmosphere. Two things are necessary, the inward contact with the closest of all brotherhoods, which will enable them to overcome their own unsociability, if such there be, and the outward approach of those who are moved by the temper of the Kingdom, friendliness. Again, where we are praying for those oppressed by poverty. They

need, inwardly, to be under the influence of a society which is master of its circumstances, and outwardly to be met by those who can give them the opportunity of finding an occupation.

In order to get a more comprehensive view, let us go back to the beginning of the prayer and consider it in its bearing on a subject which forces itself on all our minds—industrial troubles. We think of the spiritual world, where all are active and in perfect harmony, and of God, who is the secret of their energy, the provider of their opportunity, and the co-ordinator of their aims. Having seen this as clearly as may be, we think as clearly as we can of the great cohorts of the industrial world, being careful to remember such individuals as may be known to us. These put us into living touch with the whole organism, so that not only do we think more clearly, and thus exercise our influence more efficiently, but, since we are moved by that perfect inner organisation and are linked up to the outer world, we draw the latter in the right direction. And because our face is set on God we are open to His spirit, which flows down through us into those by whom our heart is touched.

Take another example. We are trying to support one of our home clergy by our prayers. The waves of this world are continually washing against him, gently it may be, but nevertheless moving him in their own direction. We ask that he may be subjected to the flow of the hosts of the Kingdom ever moving

towards God, and borne along by it, so that he carries his flock in the right direction. But the flock themselves are part of that Kingdom. Our petition, therefore, is also a request that they may come nearer to him, that he and they may become really intimate, so that heart may speak to heart. Then, also, are to be considered the occasions on which the citizens of the Kingdom, usually scattered amongst the citizens of the world, gather together to act together in prayer and worship—the Kingdom is to come together in church, and all its members to make a point of coming, to renew their sense of fellowship and give to each other the comfort of seeing that there is a Kingdom, and not merely solitary believers. Besides those who are likely to come, or who come occasionally, there are those who really are citizens, but have never understood the nature of the current of life which moves the deeper level of their spirits. They know not who they are that influence them, because they keep the Kingdom at a distance. We pray, then, that their distant manner of thought may be altered, and that the Kingdom may consequently be allowed to come so near that they can recognise it for what it is, no mere current of opinion, but a host of friends, a hidden society which finds expression—imperfect though that expression may be—in the outward gathering of formal membership and worship.

So pertinent, then, and so comprehensive is this clause when it is worked out. But we have kept the

best till the last, for we must add to all this the recollection that the coming of the Kingdom is the coming of the King. The vital point in religious progress is that at which Christ Himself comes so near that He touches the soul with so plain an action that it perceives and knows Him. It is necessary for the truth of Christianity to come home to us, but more necessary that He come and make His home in us. But what need then of the Kingdom? Much, for our religion must be social and not selfish. Moreover, being what we are, we need some outer manifestation to steady our minds, and this is provided by the little fragment of the Kingdom with which we company. It may be only a hand's-breadth of the lowest hem of His garment, but we recognise the power that flows through it, and the sight of that bit of His vesture is a comfort to our human touch. And the very existence of the Kingdom as an element in the society about us is a wholesome reminder that religion must issue in solid results, while even these results are never final, for they are not finished acts, but souls in progress.

In making this thorough use of the implications of the clause we are getting nearer to the balance of the Gospels. The thought of the Kingdom bulks largely in His teaching, and if we are to think as widely as He did and in the directions in which His mind moved, we must find a way of giving this a proportionate place in our efforts at expansion. The conduct of life depends largely on the factors on which we set our attention,

and one of life's dangers is that we may fail to observe what is of most importance. The application of this phrase, "the Kingdom of God," to all manner of subjects teaches us to perceive the close and implicit connection between all the servants of God, and perceives it to be the result of a spiritual association and intercourse which is not far from the surface of life. In consequence, our prayer becomes easier, because it is so much more social. And in all our goings and comings, our doing and thinking, we are continually cheered as we recognise the surface movements of life as signals of this Kingdom of Heaven, only half-concealed from our bodily vision. Nor is it a trifling gain that we can translate our ideals from the future to the present, from mere words to actual living people, who embody what we long for and are being pressed into the very foreground of life by God Himself.

CHAPTER VI

"THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"

"THY Will be done" has most unfortunate associations. Its use on tombstones and in a certain popular hymn only serve to make plain the meaning which it already bears in the popular mind: "It can't be helped." "Having tried to get our own way and failed, we must just put up with God's." We thus confine the expression "the Will of God" to the unpleasant things of life. If we ever stopped to think it out, we should save ourselves from drifting into an error which has far-reaching effects. For what is the Will of God for us? That we should develop every power which He has implanted in us. That we should be noble, gracious, kindly and serviceable. That we should not trifle away our capacities, but exert them to the full by working on difficult materials, like the sculptors of Egypt, who turned away from clay and wood to hew the most obdurate of stones into faces of imperishable majesty, the mingled boldness and restraint of whose lines could only have been formed by the wrestling of an indomitable art against the resistance of granite. It is only our gluttony for pathos which has mistaken the "Not my will, but thine

be done" of Gethsemane for a despairing resignation and failed to hear in it the unshakable undertone of a will triumphing over every obstacle, including self, determined to force human nature to its utmost capacity, even in face of the certainty of wrenching the body to inevitable death.

With that the supreme example before us, we can get back into this Prayer its proper trumpet tone. For it is God's Will that I should live at my highest, whatever the cost. It is God's Will that my aspirations should become my practice. It is God's Will that we should live as citizens of Heaven, not as units of earth. It is God's Will for each that he should be as widely useful as possible. "Make the most of them, O Lord," "Nerve us all to greater efforts"—such thoughts as these are the lawful meaning of these words.

We have been looking on the doing of God's Will in Heaven. We have felt it so near that we touched it. We saw it, not afar off, but all around us. It was not a remote ideal, but a present fact. We have seen it as the perfecting, and not the crushing, of life. There was no loss of individuality, but an enrichment of each and a variety among all. Our inner being, our true selves and theirs, lived in it in fulness and happiness. We knew that inner being to be the greater part of ourselves and not a mere fragment. We looked, it may well be, with some astonishment, certainly with elation, on the greatness to which God has wrought our inner

life, so much fairer and nobler is it than the corner into which we shut ourselves to live our earthly life. Now we are led on to ask that, as He has carried His work so far into our nature, He will carry it further and key the body into accord with Himself, as He has tuned the spirit. We ask that what He has done in Heaven He will do also in Earth : that the inner world may so mould the outer that it become its perfect expression.

" Thy Will be done " and not " May we do Thy Will " is the exact tenor of the phrase. In a sense, " May we do Thy Will " is the final form of the process, but we cannot come to that desire without the help of God. And even when it passes from desire to determination, God must still be our fellow worker. Even when the will is set on it, it is hard to make the outer man conform to the inner. Motives and desires from the debatable ground that lies between the surface and the depths impede and distort our intentions. The clumsiness of the body turns our grace to grotesque. The sickness or the weariness or the nervousness of the body, not to mention its greed, causes it to move askew. And the outer man is no detached block which encounters no resistance. Upon it is exerted the pressure of the world in obvious, visible, threatening shapes, and in insidious thoughts that slip into the mind and then proclaim themselves as old inhabitants with a right to be heard. We have to reckon with the fact that just as the inner world converges on the inner man,

so the outer world converges on the outer man. I cannot, then, make my outer man what he ought to be: I cannot make him respond perfectly to that world within unless I am strong enough to overcome whatever hostile forces press on me from without. They are not all hostile, either with opposition or inertia, but they are to a degree which is beyond my power. I ought not to evade them, if I could, for I am put into this world for the purpose of moving them into harmony with God. The re-creation of the world is too big a task for me; no one less than its Creator is potent enough to procure that.

Again, supposing that I am determined to carry out God's will, even to the limited extent of my nature and opportunities, I am not capable of supervising the whole extent of my action. I touch and affect so many people at so many points. I have uses of which I am unaware. I serve purposes which I cannot grasp. The meaning of the ever-changing combinations of humanity into which I am brought evades me. The impact of my personality on the lives about me is far too incessant, far too complicated and far too subtle for my mind to understand. At any particular moment, some small, particular patch of my organism is occupying my attention, and occupying it completely, but all the rest is acting and reacting. As things are, my nature does not move harmoniously and as a single whole. Besides, such a little effects so much, an unconsidered gesture, an unnoticed dulness of speech may chill and depress

someone of whose presence I am scarcely aware. Face the intercourse of a single day and think of the waves you have been sending out across the waters of life, and you may well ache with a sense of responsibility. We must spontaneously and instantly be the right person at every moment, with its new combination, or we do harm instead of good. So, then, we need the help of a mind capable of grasping and directing every detail of our own nature and of all the natures on which we act—in short, the mind of God.

In the past we have been inclined to regard the Will as a special part of our nature. Nowadays, however, we seem driven to the conclusion that it is rather the totality of our nature, the whole man as set in a determined direction. If this view be correct, it enforces what has just been said. For my will, to be complete, must combine and employ every faculty which I possess, and the attention and pressure of God will be needed to make me effective in every member. But, this theory also implies that when we speak of the Will of God, we speak of God bringing His whole nature to bear. In any case, we ought not to think of the Will of God as something which is detachable from God Himself, as if it simply meant the laws or the decisions of God. God's Will is Himself, and only He Himself can put Himself into action. No human being or beings know enough about Him to translate His ideas into actions. He must do it Himself. So, then, this clause, like the preceding ones, is really a petition and not

only an aspiration or a resolve. But, as, indeed, in thinking of the previous clauses, we are averse to thinking of it as a request, because it seems illogical and impertinent to ask God to do His own Will. What is to prevent Him? I admit the theoretical difficulty. But I think that it arises from the unconsidered assumption that God has not the power to hold His own hand. Actual experience—and experience cannot be gainsaid—shows that God does not insist on doing His Will. There are times when I choke and frustrate the impulses which He sends into me. There is one obstacle which He will not sweep away, and that is my will. He respects it and waits till I will turn and act with Him.

It is, I think, willed by God that certain results be attained. But the object on which His Will is set is not the getting a certain amount of work done, but the development of the workers. His objective is man as he is to be. He moves us to act in such a way as shall keep all our possibilities growing—and which of us knows his own possibilities? Were it left to us, then, our lives would be rather a gamble, endeavouring to provide for we know not what. We cannot see more than a step ahead at most. If energy and effort are not to be wasted, some mind must be implicated which knows the successive goals which we are to achieve. Never was this truer than at this moment. A new world is to be constructed. Looking at the past, we see that great social systems are built up by men who are

almost unconscious of what they are doing. They must be based on principles embedded at the very roots of men's natures and held implicitly by vast masses, not on programmes which necessarily can only be grasped and held by a few, while the rest are held in control and shepherded, and so have no real part as thinking individuals. The building of those two empires, alike only in name—the Roman and the British—affords example enough. We need more than leadership ; we need a common impulse, springing up in the heart of every man, and shaping his own attitude to his own special opportunities. No mind less comprehensive than the mind of God is capable of so much, and no one save God can deal with those depths of human nature out of which these instincts spring with all their strength and flexibility.

It has been said that the Roman Empire fell because the Romans did not understand their own institutions, and that the same fate may befall the British Empire for the same reason. However that may be, the remark does point out the danger of acting on uncomprehended instinct. We need to understand whence these instincts come, and deliberately learn to identify ourselves with God who is in them. We can only escape the Nemesis of that misunderstanding by learning to say with St. Paul, " Henceforth I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." That is a paradox, and, it seems to me, must remain a hopeless paradox unless God Himself shows me how to combine my individuality

with His, and makes me one with Him. From my own side, I must confess, the problem seems insoluble. Once again, then, I find myself compelled to give " Thy Will be done " its full meaning of " May Thy Will be done by Thee through me, and by me with Thee," and to avoid limiting it to " May I do Thy Will."

Hitherto I have considered the clause as forming the conclusion of what has gone before. We have seen our friends and clients living God's Will in Heaven, we have seen the power of God expressed in that society moving downwards (or outwards, as it may be better to put it) first in that concentrated stream which we call His Holiness (or in technical language, sanctifying power) in such a form that it is recognised and named as God Himself. We have seen that power moving towards us in the shape of the march of the hosts of the Kingdom of Heaven, the uprise, the increasing influence of those in whom God dwells. Now we see the life of that society, the purposeful God with His decided Will expressing itself through individual lives in earth. I want to discuss that word " earth " a little further, but, before doing so, I must say a little more about the relation of the individual to the Will of God. At the back of our minds there is a feeling that if everyone did the Will of God, we should all be trimmed to one pattern. This is one of those latent objections which only need to be brought to light to be exposed. It is confuted by the conception of the Body of Christ. If we are members of a body, we must be of varying

character, as St. Paul has made clear for all time. Or if we look at that creation which is produced by His Will, we see an incredible variety of types, and within each type innumerable variations. A rose is exactly as He willed it to be, but one rose differs from another, neither does it express His Will either less or more than a lily. Storm and sunshine, sun and moon, all fulfil the one Will. But more crippling than this difficulty is the shadow of fatalism. If I, or those for whom I pray, do the Will of God, what becomes of my own will? Is the only use of the will to submit itself to God? If so its life seems but a suicide. It seems to me that we darken the evidence of experience with a confusion of words. Fate and free-will find their reconciliation in love. I cannot but love my beloved, she is my fate; I love her gladly, for I choose to do so of my own free will; both of these statements become truer as life goes on. I love to do as my friend desires, and nothing has helped me towards achieving my personality as much as my love for my friends. We are considering the ways and effect of the God of Love, and we ought to remember that while love is an overmastering impulse, it brings one's whole nature to fruition and causes him to be more truly himself than ever before.

These considerations seem to be rather more theoretical than practical—and the consideration of the Lord's Prayer as a guide to thought and belief is a task which needs a book to itself, which I hope to write some day. But they have a very practical bearing. For their effect

on our mind is to guard us against any attempt to mould other people after our own pattern. There is a real danger. As I have implied throughout, there is an element of suggestion in prayer. In any case, our friends are affected by what we think of them. But when heart comes so close to heart as it does in prayer, this effect is intensified greatly. I find, however, that, for myself at least, the danger of imposing my own ideal is counteracted by the impression produced by the variety of people among whom I pray, and makes me more and more careful to keep quite a number of people in view whenever I pray, even when my prayer arises out of a special necessity to pray for someone. But that does not dispose of the whole difficulty. There is suggestion, and even if there were not, prayer is an interference. If a man chooses to reject God, what right have I to take measures to alter his judgment? I might answer that if I argue with him I am doing the same thing. But when I do, I often get the answer, " Yes, but when you adopt the policy, which you advocate, of dropping or deferring argument, and having recourse to prayer, are you not going behind his back and trying to alter him in spite of himself? " To which I reply, " His brain is not himself. His spirit is his truer self. And in prayer I approach his spirit directly. Moreover, I am trying to reinforce a side of his nature, that side which is in contact with God, so that it may become vigorous enough to attract his attention, and so he may come to give it its due." For,

at the end of all our talk about the subconscious, it remains true that it needs to become conscious.

And now I wish to say something about " in earth, as it is in Heaven." The general opinion, at present, is that it really applies to each of the three clauses, so that, for example, what is meant is " Thy Kingdom come in earth, as it is in Heaven." Since I consider the clauses to describe a continuous process ending in earth, I am not inclined to take this view. At the same time, it may be as well to keep the idea in mind, lest we should think that any of the stages is left behind. The Name is hallowed in earth ; the Kingdom comes to earth. The life is manifest as a whole, and not merely in an earthly result.

By a felicitous accident, the exact form of words which we use at this point is " in earth " and not " on earth." Earth is the external life ; Heaven the internal spiritual life, so far as it is in touch with God. As I have mentioned above the plural " Heavens " has a wider range, but the singular " Heaven " refers to the spiritual atmosphere above us, in one sense, but only immediately above us—the sphere in which our better nature lives. It is, as both St. John and St. Paul point out, a place—to use that useful but dangerous word—of struggle, but of victorious struggle. Our endeavours to clear our own eyesight, and to support the better nature of those for whom we pray, is a part of that struggle, of which we shall have to speak further. My point at this moment is that we live on two planes, our bodies are in

earth, our spirits in Heaven. We ask, then, not simply that the heavenly part of us may be able to act through our bodies, but may subdue and incite the very body to become entirely harmonious to the laws of the spirit. The body powerfully affects the spirit, especially in these days when so much thought and care is given to bodily conditions. So the body may be a hindrance, even an opposer. But the spirit can act on the body, and will act so far as its life is made so strong as to command our attention. We are asking God, then, that His Will should be done in our earthly part, so that the body may become what He wills it to be—the supple and ready instrument and expression of a higher life.

CHAPTER VII

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

SO far we have been led to consider the bringing of power to those for whom we are praying. For the sake of clearness, we have had to speak of the force of God as coming from outside them, as indeed it does, but we must remember that that force acts on them, not by pushing them about, but by welling up within them, as an electric current enters into a motor, enabling it to move. The Kingdom of Heaven does not hustle them along, like a rushing crowd, but inspires them like the circle of enthusiastic friends which it is. The inspiration comes from others, but the action is their own. Consequently, they need strength to respond to the call; they need to be sufficiently robust to translate the impulse into action, and to carry on their lives on a larger scale. So we come naturally to the request that they may be fed. More is being asked of them than before, and more is going to be asked of them. A certain strength is needed to bear strength. A feeble body, under the influence of a powerful stimulus, would respond badly, would hurl itself hither and thither, and so become too exhausted to act. A weak mind, similarly, would

either break down under the strain or become violent and fanatical. We can easily find illustrations of this if we remember how some natures are affected by religion or politics or even love.

What is required is a sufficiency of strength to accept power, and neither break down under it nor pass beyond self-control. Our lives need to be characterised by grace. We are apt to think of " grace " as a religious word by itself. It has a peculiar element, as used in religion, namely, the idea of a free gift. But the religious and the secular uses of the word shade off into one another, and the secular use forms a valuable commentary on the religious. Let us consider our ordinary, week-day use of the word. Take the adjective " graceful." Its opposites are " ungraceful," " graceless," " disgraceful." In all these there is the idea of power badly used, ill-adapted to its proper end or used to a wrong end. This gives us by contrast the idea of power exactly adapted to its proper end and rightly handled. We speak of a girl moving with grace, or a bird flying gracefully, or a flower as being poised gracefully on its stem. Here we get the idea of a mean between two extremes, weakness and clumsiness. Three girls are called to some duty. One drags her feeble limbs, and moves languidly ; she lacks grace. Another tramps along the road and into the room, every limb indulging in violent and unnecessary action. The third moves, as we say, with exquisite balance, she uses exactly the right amount of strength, she has perfect

control of herself; we say, "What grace!" She comes to her task fresh and vigorous; the others are weary or flustered. Her very arrival is a comfort to the invalid, while the mere appearance of the others is distressing. The point is, as I have said, that she has strength to act, and strength to be absolute mistress of herself, strength to respond of her own accord, without either being merely borne along or dissipating her energies. And this depends on her being properly fed. Consider the appearance of three girls. One overfeeds: she is heavy and awkward; a second cannot or does not take enough food: she is emaciated and ill-shapen; the third eats rightly: she is fit and graceful. The ministration of grace, therefore, is the ministration of food, exactly as we need it. We need that inward strengthening, for which "food" is the only name, which enables us to act for ourselves, of our own free will, as self-determined individuals. We need to be well nourished, if we are to act gracefully and to speak graciously. Unless we do so, our best intentions are frustrated, and we lack the charm which disposes others to allow themselves to be acted on and which will exert that fascination which alone will induce them to seek the higher life of which we ought to be exponents.

Now let us turn to the actual wording of the clause. There is no doubt that the word "daily" is a correct translation, and, furthermore, that it is lawful to emphasise or clear its meaning by saying, "Give us *day by day*." This is a small point, but there are times

when it seems better to express what we mean. For though we are bidden not to worry about the morrow, yet we are bound to think of the morrow and to plan for it. Into this necessary provision for the future, we rightly take God as our partner and our helper. But the word which is translated "daily" is, in a sense, unique. It has not been found in any other passage, in the New Testament or outside it, and our only means of deciding its meaning is from its derivation. There are two possible derivations, one giving "daily," and the other a meaning more difficult to turn into English, but which comes to something like "coming from above." I myself am inclined to give a good deal of weight to this second suggestion. I do not regard the two renderings as hostile to one another, but rather as supplementing one another, so that, squeezed into this one phrase we have the suggestion of the physical food *and* the spiritual food which we need each day. We exhaust ourselves mentally and physically, and have to fall back on supplies which are ministered to us. We are not reduced to self-dependence or limited by the boundaries of our own resources, but have ample supplies from which to gain energy, both for the continuance of our undertakings and for an extension of our breadth of action.

Whether it is right or wrong to read this second meaning into the word, the idea is certainly implied. For though it be only the supply ministered to the body, it is "bread to strengthen man's heart." And when

bread is taken, as it must be taken, to stand for all the needs of the body, this remains true. To take an instance, I have often known people whose lives were made dismal and ineffective for the want of common daylight. Deprived of the beneficial action of the sun upon their bodies, their nervous tone was lowered, with disastrous results to their moral tone. Many a person has become the victim of ill-temper, of suspiciousness, of drink or of drugs, simply for the want of this health-giving food. There are, of course, innumerable other instances, but I select this as showing how far-reaching these petitions are, and how such pressing topics as housing and the like find their natural place in this most comprehensive of prayers.

Bread, it is believed, was chosen for mention, as being the most universal and therefore typical food, and therefore standing for all bodily needs. But, to us at least, it has a further suggestion. We must have bread; and man has not only brought its production to a fine and certain art, but is continually on the watch to secure its continuance. Yet, among all the manufactures which overshadow it in this country, it stands apart as an undertaking in which man's efforts are at the mercy of forces which he can neither control nor forestall. In this especially, but in all other things in general, we are only masters of a few of the mighty whirl of forces which sustain our world and all the life upon it, and we must look to Him to control it so that we are helped, and to ourselves so that we do not come

into conflict with the forces of Nature. Again, the very thought of our bread reminds us of our dependence on one another. It is *our* bread. Nations are fed or stinted according as they work together or fail to act in harmony. The most elementary necessities of life will only be continued to us if a spirit of concord arises in the hearts of all men. We find ourselves, therefore, led on to regard ourselves as members of a world-wide family, which eats of a common table. We cannot pray for the necessities of our little circle of friends without bringing in the whole of mankind, for without their prosperity and co-operation our own daily loaf will fail. On the other hand, if I fail to do my share in promoting the world's welfare, I imperil its very food supplies, and if I take and waste more than my share, I am depriving others. At the best, there is only enough to go round. This "give *us*," should be a continual reminder of the needs of others.

We fail, I think, to work out the implications of the word "food" just because it is so familiar that it does not seem to need thinking about. But a familiar idea was not chosen to save us the trouble of thinking; rather it was chosen because it clearly indicated lines along which we could think out the subject. Now, bread cannot be given unless it be taken. There must be an appetite, or the bread is offered in vain. So we find that the prayer includes others besides those who are already anxious for the things of God. We want them to understand that their hunger for a true and

noble life is a hunger for God, not to be fed on scraps or dulled with drugs. If they have no such hunger, we want it to be aroused. Here we come to the thought of the many people who are being blinded by a belief which is only being stated by a few (though these few are important), but is held implicitly by many, viz., that there is something mean in the Christian attitude of dependence on God. They think that it is nobler to be self-reliant and to depend on no one but themselves. The error is palpable. No one can be self-reliant. If it depended on myself, I should never get a meal cooked. Even if I had the time and ability, I should not be able to procure the necessary materials. And if I could be my own gardener and stock-raiser and huntsman, I must rely on the force of Nature to produce my food. The truth, as I have said, is obvious. Even as applied to the things of the mind it is obvious. But minds which are blind to it need clearing from within. The man needs to realise his dependence for himself. He must grasp the need for himself and not be fed, as it were, by stealth. He cannot be fully fed till he recognises his want of food and deliberately seeks to have it supplied. And until he recognises the Source of life his life is warped by error, and his mental stature is stunted for want of that contact with God which is brought about by the soul's hunger, just as a child is continually brought back to its parents by its need of food.

Let me take another illustration which will give our

thoughts a wider scope. One of the effects of physical weakness is a dislike for food. One of the problems which a nurse has to face is that of inducing patients to eat. They cannot have strength to recover unless they take food, and even though they themselves know this, they cannot bear the sight of it. So the nurse has to find food which will tempt them, and has to arouse their wills to make an effort to take it. And this requires knowledge and skill. We all know many sickly souls which are in the like case, and only ask to be let alone. We know that there are plentiful supplies of food—the strong meat of the word, spoken or written, the Sacraments, God's gift of Himself whenever we pray, God's conveyance of Himself to us through the influence of others, and the meat of doing His Will. But who shall choose among so many? And who can not only choose the exact form needed, and judge the time aright, but also arouse the will and desire? God only. We must turn to Him and ask Him to act. But we must be sure that we do not hinder. We need to pray in order to make our own desires so strong that they will affect others, and in order to make the idea so dominant in our own minds that it will really influence others. And, looking at the whole world, we see that this refusal to "taste and see" is not the fad of a few individuals, but a weakness of the whole community. We may well then say not "Give him his daily bread," but "Give *us* our daily bread," and learn to remember that so long as the nation is unaltered,

so long as it is disinclined, our own desires are half stifled.

We can carry the analogy further by thinking of the effects of physical starvation, especially in that form which we call "anæmia." The doctor knows that the nervous system is being starved, and as he labours to find a way of feeding it he is urged on by the terror of the results of this starvation—intense irritability, fixed ideas, delusions. As one sees these same effects appearing in men's minds and spirits, as one sees men to be the prey of needless exasperations and unfounded delusions, is not one bound to turn to the Great Physician, who alone can judge their case and give them the precise food which will make them strong to bear the facts of life and to know its truth?

Or again: Anyone who studies the social unrest of the time, not in books, but in the homes of the people, knows how much of it is due to ill feeding. I remember an artisan saying to me, "If my wife fed me, as my mates are fed, on bits of food from the cook-shop, I should be as discontented and drunken as they are." Nor is this trouble confined to one class of society. The casual and chronic consumption of chocolates and sweetmeats, of liquor, of drugs, saps many a constitution and brings moral disease in its train. Nor have we to look far for a mental analogue. Every Sunday brings to me the sad reflection that, while a few are gathered together to share the family meal of the household of God, and to feed their minds upon His Word,

hundreds and hundreds of thousands are devouring descriptions of crime and lust or staying their minds with the bitter draught of malicious gossip. And so I might go on. But the more I reflect on these troubles the more I see how false appetites of body and mind are linked together, and how they run through the whole structure of the social organism. Who can act wisely enough, who can act on a sufficiently wide scale, who can alter men's hearts so as to alter the most important part of their environment, the temper of the public, except God Himself? I honour those who are labouring at external conditions, and for them, too, I pray that they may be given their daily bread, that they may be free to devote themselves to this work and may have strength and will to act with wisdom and resolution. Nor do I forget with what patience and ingenuity God contrives to feed men unawares, nor how many take His food, not knowing whose hand ministers it. But, believing as I do that mankind is faced with a long and arduous journey through a wilderness of chaos and privation, I think that we have especial need to pray for our nation and the world, "Give us day by day our daily bread."

CHAPTER VIII

"FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES, AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US"

WE have reached the second half of the prayer, and there has been no mention of sin or wrongdoing until now. This, when one comes to think of it, is markedly at variance with a type of thought which not only underlies many prayers and the structure of many services, but the whole conception of religion in many minds. It is often taken for granted that we must begin with a sense of sin and be driven along by it until we seek refuge in God. We must, it is thought, begin by getting rid of sin, and then set to work to do what is right. And it is tacitly assumed that God's only function, or chief function, is to come in where we have failed. All this is opposed by the teaching of the Lord's Prayer. It teaches us, not to climb from failure to success, but to lay hold on success and bring it to the rescue of failure. It teaches us first to look at what God has done in man, and then to extend the sphere of God's action downwards. It teaches us to seek the Kingdom of Heaven first, and to take our stand there, and then, and not until then, to turn and set our faces against sin. It teaches us not the climbing upwards of man from a low estate, but the drawing upwards of man's lower nature by the power

of God dwelling in his higher nature. What we have been led to do is to establish man in the strength of God first, and then to set him to secure the continuance of his new life against all menaces. We do not depend on the aspirations of man, much less his disgust at his failures, but on the coming of God.

An important fact is implied. The sense of sin is a product of the sense of holiness. It is when we come into contact with nobility of character that we notice our own pettiness. Even when we are stirred into a desire for better things by the discovery that we have got our lives into a mess, we are moved by the contrast between what we have brought ourselves to and the latent greatness which we have betrayed. After all, what disturbs us is not the sight of the bad or poor results which we produce, but the disquietude which arises from the suppression or neglect of the reformed nature which God has made and we have buried. Sin, I say, is never seen for what it is until it comes under the searchlight of goodness. Compare two girls, one brought up in a good home and the other in a thieves' kitchen. Suppose that each steals half a crown. Whatever her reason for taking the money, the good girl will feel that she has disgraced herself, the bad one that she has done something smart. The difference in background has revealed the truth to the former girl, the similarity in background has hidden it from the latter. But we ought to depend, not on what I have called background, but on the light which our own eyes

cast. The only hope for the habitual thief is that the light of God which is hidden away in some secret cell of her heart—and, thank God, always sheds a ray or two through some chink—may penetrate upwards till it lightens her eyes, so that they cast the light of God on every object on which she gazes.

With this in mind, I have, so far, only spoken of our friends as being in need or in difficulty. But now we can consider those on whom our prayers fall because their faults grieve or sadden us. The one method holds good, the one law holds true. We must remember that they will never feel the gravity of their sins till they feel how unworthy these are of their God-given nature. And then their only hope lies in the strengthening of their inner higher nature, till it subjugates all the rest. If it be strengthened, it cannot rest in that divided state of life in which some of our powers are set to do right and others allowed to do amiss, for it will require all its capacities to fulfil its desire for love and beauty, and have none to spare for selfishness and brutality. Greater in degree, therefore, but similar in kind, must be the struggle which we make, at the very outset of prayer, to see them at their best, on their heavenly side —to fix our attention on that angelic child-face, perhaps too undeveloped, which always beholds the face of their Father which is in Heaven. And if I reiterate a fact which is now always before my mind, every time we pray for them we act on them. We stir into life that nobility of dependence on God which they have

forgotten. We arouse the "new man" who is lying dormant. We make our suggestion to him in a true and healthy order—that his real self awake from sleep and assert itself, that he look on God with understanding eyes and then turn to recognise life without God for the pitiable thing it is.

And next, what is this forgiveness which we ask God to give them? It must be something more than a forgetfulness on His part. If God's forgiveness amounted to no more than an overlooking of their sins, it would not profit much. For when all was said and done, the consequences of their acts would remain, and would need to be undone somehow. We are saying "us," and I do not think that we can limit that "us" to the few whom we know; we must think of the whole community. It is part of the way in which God enables us to retrieve our self-respect, that He allows—nay, forces us to face the consequences of our ill-doing and take some share in righting them. God cannot overlook sin, for He is too anxious to bring its progeny of sins to an end. If we look exclusively at the individual himself, a mere shutting of the eyes to his past would not help him. If I have been a liar, although God and all the world conspired to forget the lies I have told, that by itself would do me little good, for I should be a liar still. If I detect a clerk stealing my money and just decide to say nothing about it, but to treat him as if it had not been, I should do him harm instead of good. What I ought to do is to find some way of altering him,

so that he will never want to steal again. That is what God is after; that is the forgiveness of God. It will be seen, of course, that God's attention is fixed on what the man is becoming and not what he has been. The actual sins, therefore, drop into a secondary place. It was the person that mattered, and matters still. God is not concerned with lists of misdoings, or, for that matter, doings. He is concerned with persons, and with those persons in the form into which He is going to mould them. And therefore He encourages us, not to think of the past as something which has settled our character, but to look to the future for the development of our real self. He put His weight into the new man, so as to enable him to go forward and leave the past behind. However hardened that old character may have become, and however binding its habits, He invigorates the inner man so that he bursts through them. They are loosened, it may be in a flood of tears, and, though it be gradually, they are sloughed.

The way in which we have been praying for them is, then, justified. For we have begun by endeavouring to draw in all the power of God to enforce the nature of the man as it is transformed by God. We have kept our attention on that, till we have come to a point where we can consider what is to be done next. Not till now do we touch the problem of the reaction of the old man and the environment of which he is a part. The first thing that is required is that the new man shall not be cramped or diverted by the wrong habits of the

old. The forgiveness of God consists in the man's being enabled to step on, freeing himself from his disabilities and refusing to allow himself to go or to be led astray.

In the two forms of the Prayer which have been handed down to us, two different words are used, "debts" and "trespasses." It is a pity that either word should be neglected in favour of the other, for they are complementary and both are really needed. "Debts" refers to doing too little, "trespasses" to overdoing. "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done." I sometimes think, indeed, that if special prominence is to be given to either, it should be to debts, for sins of omission are hard to detect, and therefore the more dangerous. But in any case, I want to press it at this point, as I want to impress its importance in prayers about social and national troubles, as well as personal troubles. When we look at the sad state of the world around us, we are conscious that want of consideration has been one of the main causes, if not the main cause of intolerable conditions. Men have not set out to make slums, they have ignored their growth—they have, mostly, lived at a distance and not known about them. We see now that this is culpable, and the cry, which I hear so often, "What can I do? What must we do?" is really a cry to be delivered from a sin of omission. When I realise how these reflections are paining our best men and women, and

when I look back with agony on my own sins of omission—and in spite of the ready excuse, "I didn't mean it," they hurt horribly—I find myself smitten by fear that my nation, my class and myself may still be doing harm by sheer blindness. It is, therefore, most necessary that we should pray, "Forgive us our debts," "Enable us to see our sins of omission." A trespass thrusts itself upon my attention, and its results compel me to consider it. But I cannot distinguish the results of my sins of omission, and consequently cannot use them to detect the sin. Therefore I am driven back on God. I cannot say to myself, "I will not ignore," when I do not know what I may be ignoring. I cannot even say, "I will not forget," when my forgetfulness has been shown me. But His mind is unsleeping and all-seeing. He knows all that He purposes us to be, and He can stimulate us till we wake and face the pain of realising how much more we must be than we have ever been. The real menace to our future as a nation and a commonwealth lies in our ignorance, and we must ask God to cure that, for we cannot. We can in part see what is positively wrong—but how to tell what is missing!

I have already suggested that sinners have an especial claim on us, because we share their sins. The thought recurs here with renewed force. For our private and personal sins are too often a hindrance to the progress of others. They destroy our capacity for prayer, not only because they put us out of humour with God, but because our thoughts stray away from prayer to them.

How often have I found that while words of intercession were on my lips, my heart was full of bitterness and anger! Again, unless we are forgiven our sins, and our transformed nature is predominant, we may be exerting a baneful suggestion on those whose spirits are so near to us as they are at our time of prayer. Again, as we come across these people in our ordinary intercourse, our sins either exasperate or encourage them to evil. And, in thinking of the sins that devastate society, we must recollect that we ourselves are affected by them to some extent. It may be in milder or more decorous forms, but greed, for example, is greed in all its forms, and one form encourages another. Nor, since we are members one of another, does it seem probable that any one of us can get clear of sin until the whole atmosphere is purged of it.

And now I come to the second half of the clause, "As we forgive them that trespass against us," or "As we forgive our debtors." I must confess that this has caused me more difficulty than any part of the prayer. But before coming to the main difficulty, I want to bring out a minor one, which has a certain educative value. When I think of forgiving my debtors, I find that I resent sins of omission more than sins of commission. It is hard to be deliberately ignored, but it is harder to be forgotten. But candour compels me to confess that I share this fault, and that those who give way to it are as helpless without the assistance of God as I. So I am led to put myself in

their place, and though I do not find it easy to forgive even then, yet I find it possible.

But the great difficulty is of another kind. How can I stand up in the face of God and say that I forgive, when the fact is that I do not? I try, with more or less energy, but I do not succeed at all well. Still, on the other hand, if I view forgiveness in the right way, as a process, and not the mere striking out of a record, the alteration of my attitude is at least part of the process. I have begun to forgive. No doubt I need the stimulus of our Lord's stern commentary with which St. Matthew follows up the prayer. I need to have these words put here in order that I may try to rise to them. For prayer must be above my average level, since it is the expression of my highest. And though I have scarcely reached the point of really forgiving, yet the words may at least be taken as a vow and a resolve.

But though all that justification be true, I am still left feeling uncomfortable. I cannot forget the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Supposing that I do forgive, is there not something indecent and even ludicrous in my solemnly informing God of my virtue. I am not there to tell Him how good I am, nor indeed to talk about myself. There are two points involved here and we must take them separately. With regard to my own goodness—after all, that is His success and I may well thank Him for producing it, so far as I have allowed Him to. But, further, it is extremely hard to believe in the forgiveness of sins. As a general state-

ment it sounds all right, but when we think of particular classes of persons it seems impossible. That they should be so altered that they will cease to offend seems incredible. Character seems so fixed. That we should be able to alter our attitude to them, so that, instead of striking at their fault, we shall arouse and support their better nature! That we should cease to flame up with indignation at their stupidity! That we should carefully overlay our recollections of the past with the thought of conjectural improvements in the future! If Dr. Jekyll can dream of this, Mr. Hyde is lurking in the background, neither dead nor sleeping. Now, it seems to me that "As we forgive them that trespass against us" serves the purpose of upsetting all this. For it reminds me that these impossibilities have been achieved. Flung back on to my own past, I can see that even I can forgive. There are people about whom I once felt hopeless. I was sure that I never could forgive them. I do not know that I wanted them to be forgivable. But whatever they might become, I felt that I could never get over my animosity. And yet I have done it. People say, "Oh yes, that is the healing result of time. Time helps you to forget." That is one of those vague rhetorical statements which are so misleading. It was not time that did it, though time was needed. What brought about the change was what took place in me and in them. I altered and they altered. The alteration took time, yes; but it was my act and theirs. It still seems a miracle. In the sense

that God was its primary cause, it was. But nevertheless I did it; I acted as a free agent. Therefore I am led on to face the whole difficulty boldly, and say, "I have done it before and by the help of God I can do it again. I do not feel forgiving on certain matters at this moment, but, looking to the past, I can say that God enables me to forgive."

I hope that this discussion has been useful, but it has been weakened by my discussing the clause as though it read, "as I forgive them that trespass against me." I thought it better to do so, in order to meet the force of the difficulty as it arises in actual practice. But it disappears when I say "as *we* forgive," for I am then speaking of the Kingdom of God as a whole. The Divine Society does forgive—forgiveness is what it is out for. I am unforgiving only in so far as I stand apart. When I rise into that life of which Christ is the centre, I rise above my obstinacies. When the full stream of that Divine life which flows through men at their best comes to me, it lifts me from the mud in which I am stuck and carries me along. And as I hold on to these others, they, too, are carried on, and I and they leave our old selves and our old conditions behind. The past has gone, but we persist, and set our course gladly to the point when we shall not strain against one another any longer, but use sail and oar and current to enable us to voyage side by side, supporting one another in hours of danger, and helping one another forward in the one Quest.

CHAPTER IX

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL"

THESE two clauses are often spoken of as though they meant much the same thing. But surely it is not probable that in framing so short a prayer, our Lord would repeat the same idea twice—and that an idea which He does not place in the foreground, but leaves to the last. A little consideration shows us that there is a marked difference. Perhaps the best way of bringing out the meaning of the two clauses is to dwell on this difference and contrast the one with the other. "Lead us not" has to do with the future; it suggests precaution against what may take place. "Deliver us" has to do with the present; it suggests escape from something which is now in existence—"Deliver" may be taken as having to do with the results of the past, but that comes to much the same thing. Between the nouns there is the same kind of contrast as between the verbs. Temptation stands for danger; it is something we may fail under. Evil stands for defeat; it is something we have failed under.

Now let us consider them as following the rest of the prayer. "Forgive us our trespasses and debts" was,

as we saw, a setting free of man's whole nature to follow the direction imparted by the impulse of God. We think of the man as going forward along the road of life, and, as soon as we do so, we think of his dangers —that is to say, his temptations. For the road of life is always new. Even though my difficulties at this moment are of a kind which I have had to deal with before, there is always the old risk, complicated by some new element. So I may be tempted to carelessness, or I may be tried by some combination of circumstances which is beyond my knowledge and skill. I may be wrecked at the mouth of a familiar harbour, just because I think that I am too familiar with it to need to bother. Or I may be wrecked there by the fury of a storm for which my seamanship is no match. We are asking, then, that those for whom we pray may not be led into danger which is too great for them. We are asking that they be safeguarded from within. We are asking that to their liberty be added wisdom. And then, but not till then, do we turn our attention—and theirs—to the evil that lies without. We have already dealt in " forgive us " with the evil that lies behind and is really part of ourselves, so that this only leaves us to consider the evil forces which impinge on us from the world around. Having seen our warrior made perfect, we set him with his face to the foe.

I am going to return to the consideration of the clause about evil, but first of all I want to say a little more about the " temptation " clause. I have above para-

phrased and interpreted the clause as though it meant " Do not allow us to be led into temptation." I am inclined to do so, on the strength of a very ancient gloss, which ascribes this meaning to the words, which otherwise seem to me difficult. It does seem puzzling to us that it should be suggested that God might conceivably lead anyone into temptation. I admit the difficulty, and all I can do is to offer some suggestions which may lessen it. First of all, temptation may be used in two different meanings—incitement to wrongdoing being the one, and trial the other. We cannot use the word in the first of these senses. He cannot be conceived as tempting anyone to sin. But He can be thought of as subjecting them to trial. Indeed, it is hard to see how we could be developed without having to face and overcome difficulties which are nothing less than trials. Our friends will have these difficulties to encounter as they go on ; but we do not want them to rush upon them. Strength brings with it the very real danger of recklessness. We need to have in mind the fact that God is the only judge of the time and manner of our testing, and that we are to be reluctant to enter on trials until such time as He appoints. The words " Lead us not into temptation " might fairly be taken to express this frame of mind. I do not want to press this, as I do not feel that it is very satisfactory. But it does raise a point of great importance—namely, that one great object of prayer is to learn to think the thoughts of God, to mould our minds according to His Pattern. I have

implied this all through, but I want to state it definitely here, and I am glad of the occasion afforded by a clause whose history suggests that it has sometimes been very difficult to grasp our Lord's meaning, because that again suggests the fact that our minds need a good deal of adjusting before they will conform to His. Now, the only form of success in human life which can afford any satisfaction to us who live it, or to God who looks on it and, indeed, seeks to share it, is a success which is the result of free action. And the only possibility of freedom lies in our being in thorough agreement with the mind of God. Otherwise we must continually be hampered by coming into collision with His laws. Whatever, then, be the meaning of this clause, we are back on the same ground as " Thy Will be done," and it is worth while repeating that those are not words of mere submission, but a motto for action and, indeed, a battle-cry against evil.

And so we come to the last clause, " Deliver us from evil." I want to speak of this as briefly as I may, because I do not want to lay that very stress on the subject of evil which the Prayer avoids by postponing its mention, in any form, till the later half of the Prayer. But there are a few things which must be said. We must revise our ideas of what is evil. We must cease to confuse discomfort with evil. For example, I continually hear it said that pain is an evil. It is not. Pain is not immoral or even anti-moral. It may be used as a moral discipline. The best people are usually those

who have had most pain to bear. If pain were evil, they would be the worst. Again, the only way of getting accurate ideas of what is evil is to get accurate ideas of what is good. For this we need, at the very least, to make a far more thoroughgoing study of the Beatitudes than has yet been attempted, and this we cannot attempt here. There is one point more which I take occasion to mention, as it arises naturally out of a certain vagueness in the last word of the clause. It may be and has been taken as meaning, on the one hand, evil, as a collective term for all the evil habits and actions of the world (including ourselves), or, on the other hand, as meaning the Evil One. I do not propose to discuss which is the preferable translation. I raise the point because the alternative rendering casts a light on the whole subject of evil and also on the frame of mind which we are to cultivate in prayer and elsewhere. Whether we regard the Evil One as a person or not, it is noteworthy that the personification of evil is called the Devil. Now this is a title with a definite meaning—the person who casts things up, *i.e.*, the Accuser. That is to say: the most evil type of mind is that which feeds on accusations. The difference between God and the evil-minded chiefly lies in this, that God is anxious to justify man, the evil-minded to keep in view man's failures. God is interested in man's possibilities for good, the Accuser in man's actual faults. God is the great optimist, and pessimists are Satanic. If we are to imitate God, we must fix our attention primarily on

what is good, we must keep it in the foreground, promoting its growth as the cure for all ills. And we must remember that the mind takes its colour from what we are interested in. If, like the Accuser, we are interested in evil, we become evil, but if we are interested in what is good, we become good, and we make good, for we are delivered from the appeal of evil.

Thus is finally settled the attitude of those who pray, their attitude to those for whom they have to labour, and their attitude to themselves. When at last they have to face the evil, they retain the high motive which they have acquired from contact with God, they are still surrounded and abetted by the Kingdom of Heaven, they are still full of the impulse of the Will of God, so that even evil is but one more obstacle to be triumphed over, one more occasion of ennobling effort.

The triumphal bearing is re-echoed by the words which have been added by the piety of the Church—or, if you will, the guidance of the Spirit—" For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen." They are a perfect war-cry. But they are also a reminder of the Kingdom which we have realised, the Power we have felt, and the Glory which we have seen and which still irradiates our hearts. And they are also a thanksgiving. Herein, perhaps, lies their most obvious and useful purpose. For it is well that our thoughts be led back to God, and this is the office of thanksgiving. It is true that

it makes our hearts glad and keeps them so. But—I say it again—its great value is that it leads our attention back to God. I might add, however, that thanksgiving is necessary, if we are to include in our prayers all the points in life which we touch and the whole personality of each person for whom we pray. For we want to talk to God, not only about the things that need repair and the needs of our friends, but the things which go well and the successes of those whom we love. We cannot state all things as pleas ; some, perhaps many, can only be spoken of with thanksgiving. And the habit of thanksgiving teaches us to notice and to remember the blessings of life. The temper of our times and the unhealthy irritability from which we suffer so often are inclined to make us far too mindful of the pains of life, but a habit of thanksgiving corrects all this and produces the healthy frame of mind, which lives not from shadow to shadow, but from light to light.

CHAPTER X

THE LORD'S PRAYER AS A UNIT

THOUGH I have tried to keep to my main line of thought and to refrain from being discursive, I think that the working out of a few examples may be a help to the reader in gaining a clear grasp of the meaning of the Prayer. Some of these which I will take have already been touched on, but had better be done completely. As, however, I do not wish to re-write the whole book, I shall do little more than indicate the lines of working.

Take, first, prayer for a sick person. We begin, as always, by thinking of those whom we love. Then we think of the Apostles, full of the life of God, and of those on whom they laid their hands to heal; then of our Lord, striding in, if you will, as He strode along the roads of Syria, with a company of men and women, spurred to energy by His healing and invigorating influence. Then we think of this person, rising up on his feet, and rejoicing in the strength of Christ. The recollection of his weary body, to which the power of Christ is making its way, is still in our minds, and therefore we say *Hallowed by Thy Name.* Fulfil Thy promise that they shall "have life and have it more abundantly." Come into his body, and the bodies of

those in like case, with Thy health, and make it known as Thine ; come into his mind so that he may know who it is that heals him, and that the thought of Thee may be his refuge when fear troubles him. *Thy Kingdom come.* Send all the helpers needful to reinforce Thy action from without, those who will both tend his body and support his mind. May the King come into his knowledge, so that he may know on whom he can lean, and, also, may gladly obey those His laws on which health depends. *Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.* As Thou dost recreate his spirit, so be pleased to recreate his body ; carry Thy beneficent power through, till it amends even his body, and his bodily circumstances. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Support all those who tend him ; supply him with all things needful, and dispose him to accept and use them. *Forgive us our debts and trespasses.* Pardon us, as a community, for the breaches of physical law which have brought these burdens of disease upon us ; give us knowledge and determination to do all that we ought and omit nothing that we ought to do, in conformance with Thy laws. *Lead us not into temptation.* Keep us from being inconsiderate ; keep him from being careless, reckless, or despondent. *Deliver us from evil*, from the tendencies which may land us back into unhealthy living, and from all the menace of disease which lurks in the very air we breathe. *For Thine is the Kingdom.* It is not true that disease is more powerful than health ; infection is not

necessarily victorious over our strength ; Thou who hast knowledge and power to keep our energies flowing strongly and freely wilt guard Thy subjects, as Thou hast guarded them in the past.

Now let us suppose that we are going to pray for those on whose shoulders is laid the task of preaching the Gospel—for the sake of clearness and simplicity, we will centre our thoughts on the person who ministers to us here at home. *Our Father, which art in Heaven.* We think of the company of which we form part—and the more definitely we think of them in detail, the better we think of him who is to preach, and we think of the company of Heaven, to whom Christ, the Truth, shows Himself plainly, each of whom sees the truth expressed in all the others, but keeps glancing to Him as the essence and sum of all the truth. *Hallowed be Thy Name.* This Thy servant is going to declare Thy Name, to describe Thee, to speak Thy message as Thy ambassador : come into him, make his words powerful, cause him so to give utterance to the deep things of the Spirit that they may be manifest ; make his hearers comprehend Thy meaning, make them sensible that Thou art speaking to them, through this Thy prophet. *Thy Kingdom come.* Let us feel that he is supported and surrounded by myriads whose lives express this truth which he is trying to set forth, and who believe it because they know it ; let us be brought into touch with them, so that they may influence us, and so let Thy truth reign in our minds.

Thy Kingdom come: let the gathering be not only spiritual, gather together the citizens to meet together to assist at the declaration of Thy truth. *Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.* As Thy truth is manifest in Heaven, so make it plain on earth. As Thy love captures our hearts, so may it dominate our minds and bodies. As these whom we behold in Heaven each clearly expresses some trait of Thy nature, some aspect of Thy truth, so may he who speaks to our bodily ears convey Thy meaning clearly to us, and see it reflected in our hearts. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Give to this Thy servant some message or some inspiration by which men can live. May he be enabled to set before us a banquet which will afford us real sustenance, so that we may look up and be fed. *Forgive us our trespasses, and our debts*—all the sin that clouds our understanding and alienates our hearts. *As we forgive them that trespass against us.* Here I should like to stop my exposition for a moment, so as to point out a hindrance which arises whenever men meet together. There are sure to be some among them who have offended us, or who offend us, and unless we keep before our minds a steady resolution to forgive, anger will speedily absorb our attention, and we shall miss what is being said. *Lead us not into temptation.* The preacher has his temptations—to pride, to exaggeration, to men-pleasing, and so on; Good Lord, deliver Him. We listeners have our temptations—to fault-finding, to complacency, to stupidity, from which

Good Lord, deliver us. *Deliver us from evil.* Our old habits lie waiting for us outside; the world has not changed its mind and will be ready to oppose; our wills are so feeble that we cannot depend on ourselves to keep the high resolves which we have formed; from these and all other evils, Good Lord, deliver us.

Next, let us consider the Prayer as a petition for our whole nation. We must, at the outset, think of the nation as completely as we can—say, class by class and then district by district—and then realise that all these people are children of the one Father, even though some of them are rebellious children. Then, as representing them, we appeal for the whole family to our Father in the Heavens, in the spiritual city which is above, and in all those recesses of power which lie nearer and nearer to God's heart. I am emphasising the thought of the Heavens this time, because this is one of the cases in which we have to take some trouble to realise that God is far greater than the object on which we are asking Him to act. And while we are going to try to realise that He is among and in all these people, we have at the same time to recollect that He is also above them. Though He can reach the heart of each to raise it, though He can permeate the very earth to disturb it, yet none can reach up to disturb Him. "The Lord sitteth above the water floods; the Lord remaineth a King for ever, be the earth never so unquiet." *Hallowed by Thy Name.* Make Thy influence felt and known. Make the words of those

who proclaim Thee carry conviction. *Thy Kingdom come*, weaving strands of union which shall unite all manner of men in a combination powerful enough to hold the nation together ; send into this mass of competing parties and sects the compact host of the citizens of Heaven, which can grasp the reins of all parties, and harness the power of men into one co-operating team. *Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.* In Heaven all men find all their interest, all their occupation and all their joy in the social life of the City of God. We ask God to bring this about in earth, so that Britain may flourish on the fulness of the life of all its citizens. *Give us day by day our daily bread*, that we may be strong to do our duty, healthy in body and mind. *Forgive us our trespasses, forgive us our debts*—our national faults, our personal failings, our blindness, and our greed. *As we forgive.* Our nation has a great record of enmities buried and grievances forgotten, but it must go on to greater. *Lead us not into temptation*—the temptation of power to be violent, the temptation of weakness to be timid and faithless, the temptation of fear to be cruel, the temptation of confidence to be callous. *But deliver us from evil.* Help us to break away from the ills of the past, and to clear away the ills of the present, so that we may be free and bold to slay the head of evil whenever and wherever it may raise itself. *For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory*, and if we lean on Thee and look to Thee, neither anarchy, nor feebleness, nor gloom can bring us to a stand.

Now take a more restricted group—one's own family. Think of them as spirits, gathered happily in a little shrine, now looking lovingly on one another, now turning to speak to Him who stands in the midst. And try to realise that God is in them all, around them, above them, underneath them, that He is disclosing Himself in their hearts, and though He already discloses wonderful depths of affection in them He has greater depths to disclose. *Hallowed be Thy Name*—of Love. May we all know that our affection is part of our religion ; may Thy Name touch our hearts so that we may desire to serve one another for Thy Sake. *Thy Kingdom come.* May our home be thronged with the unseen forms of angels and saints and just men made perfect ; may friends who belong to Thy Kingdom gather around us to share our happiness, to provide us a wider field over which we can extend our family life, and to be helpers in all our doings. *Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.* May the happiness and concord in which our spirits live together exhibit itself in our earthly intercourse. Let not the affection and tenderness of our hearts be concealed by any weariness or defect of the body. *Give us this day our daily bread.* May our wants be supplied. May we always find at the family board, not only the due supply for bodily needs, but also that friendliness which is the food of the heart. *Forgive us our trespasses.* Re-mould us so that we shall not do anything to mar or divide the family life. *Lead us not into temptation.* Let not the occupa-

tion of any one of us lead him away from taking his full share in the family life. Keep each of us from shutting ourselves away from the others, or despising those outside the family circle. *Deliver us from evil.* Let us not be contaminated by the evils of the world around. And if any shadow be cast on us from the past, dissipate it with the brightness of Thy glory.

I might go on to discuss other examples, but I refrain from doing so, partly because I feel the danger of treating the Prayer as a mental problem—fascinating as that is—and partly lest I obscure the vital point, which is in each case the seeing of those for whom we pray as they are in Heaven, and the keeping of them before our minds all through the act of prayer. The personal touch, the realisation of their presence, their association with our Lord in His Kingdom—these are far more important than the exercise of our understanding or the expression of our hopes.

CHAPTER XI

THE LIFE OF PRAYER

OUR study of the subject has made it evident that the Lord's Prayer is very much more than a set of words to be said and done with. They demand an effort to lay hold of people, to raise them to God, and then to sustain them there. They involve a process which takes time to grasp ; and when that process is set in motion, time is needed to secure its effectiveness. The Prayer is intended to train us to pray for people in groups, and not singly : to get a number of people before our mind takes time, and to keep them all before our mind takes sustained care. It might be suggested that we ought to get all the people ready, so to speak, first ; then say the prayer ; and then keep our minds fixed on our friends as seen in the presence of God. I think that this is a possible method, but it would seem to require a certain steadiness and capacity of mind which I, for one, do not possess. Apart from this, I cannot think the prayer in once saying it. I therefore find myself driven to saying it over and over again. It takes me time to get my mind into it, it takes me time to get my mind on my friends, and it takes me time to get my mind on God. And the only way in which I can keep my mind in the right

frame is to stick to Christ's words. Sometimes I find it well to say the whole prayer over and over, and sometimes to repeat each clause a number of times. Each method has its own value, and it is often advantageous to use them in turn, as this gives a variety which is especially valuable when more than a few minutes are available for prayer. I know that in suggesting this I am arousing a prejudice against repetition based on the words in our familiar English translation, " When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do." What our Lord meant is difficult to discover. The single word which is translated " use vain repetitions " is not known to occur elsewhere, and might as likely mean " babble." It may be due to my ignorance, but I do not understand what heathen our Lord could be referring to. Even if the text were not of doubtful meaning, surely we are awake to the danger of laying too much stress on isolated texts. And I might point to the use of hymns with refrains in the very quarters in which this objection is urged. I am quite aware that one can go on saying any one thing while his thoughts stray far away. That has to be guarded against. But the objection, at bottom, depends on a confusion between talking and thinking. Some people seem to imagine that thought only goes on as long as we are producing a stream of words. This is simply untrue. A mother, when thinking about her child, is not making long speeches to herself. She is simply keeping her mind on the child. And what we

need is, not to keep up a flow of comments on either God or our neighbour, but to set our minds on them and keep them so. I am of opinion that, by so doing, we press our friends nearer to God or draw them nearer. But I have known people shy at the whole idea as savouring of suggestion. I cannot follow the objection. I do not believe that even the most powerful suggestion can rob a person of his free will. Few people are averse to giving good advice, and backing it up with persistent argument in order to persuade others to change their line of action. That seems to me an unmistakably direct form of suggestion, particularly when it is backed up by threats. I am glad to think that when I am praying I am exerting suggestion, for that means that I am doing something and putting it all on God's shoulders. And I have so often thought fiercely and bitterly about people, so often thought of them at their worst, that I feel I have a considerable debt to pay in the matter of suggestion. One fact of life which I have come to see plainly is that we are constantly exerting the force of suggestion on one another. We could not avoid it, even if we wanted to, and therefore we need training in order to exert it in the best possible way. And what way could be better than this ?

It will be evident from what has been said that the Lord's Prayer, used in the way which its character suggests, provides us with an admirable way of using the time which each of us is able to set apart for private

prayer. And what we have just been considering raises the question of the relation of our special times of prayer to the rest of our days. I have been driven by the stress of inquirers, as well as of my own needs, to pursue this line of thought along various lines, and, though I may appear to be led into irrelevance and even some repetition, I am bound, in discharge of my duty and my debt, to write down what has been found useful, even at the risk of appearing prolix.

I must confess that I find it invaluable to have stated times of prayer. Otherwise I fear that prayer would often have slipped out of my life altogether. Consequently, I consider it necessary, even when I am so weary that I cannot use them properly, to give at least a moment to their observance, lest I weaken a valuable habit. At the same time, I find that there is an unreasonable rigidity about the tradition which has grown up. The moments before sleep at night and on waking in the morning have a peculiar value, of which I shall speak later. But many people are incapable of sustained prayer last thing at night or first thing in the morning. In these cases, some other time or times need to be substituted. Or the difficulty of being sleepy or fidgety may be got over by walking up and down instead of kneeling. Some people find the additional advantage that, by picturing those for whom they are praying as being in particular parts of the room, they are reminded of each person or group as they pass up and down them. But some need to sit,

or even to lie down. The point is that the body must not be in a strained position or else it will conquer the mind. Besides, the exclusive association of prayer with one attitude tends to make us dissociate it from other attitudes, so that we never think of praying unless we kneel down to it.

But I want to return to the question of the relation between these our stated hours of prayer and the rest of the day. We do not stop our relationship with God or our care for our fellows from the end of one of our times to the beginning of the next. So there must be a certain amount of prayer scattered over the whole day. Should we treat this as the preparation for our set times, or trust to the impetus acquired at our set times to produce a flow of prayer whenever occasion arises? Do we regard our devotional life as flowing out of these set times or flowing into them? Have our set and stated efforts to be self-sufficient, or do they find their source in the general tenor of our lives? Are we to trust to them to bring a spirit of prayer into existence and to turn us back to God, or are we to cultivate a habit of prayer which shall find its culmination in these hours? It is well to face the question and discover where we stand or whither we are moving. I do not think that we ought to pin ourselves down to either principle exclusively. But I have come to see that while a time of prayer provides a certain stimulus for the time following, that stimulus will be lost if care is not taken; while if we neglect prayer altogether until

the appointed hour has come, much time and energy have to be consumed in the effort to collect our faculties and our materials. We find that we cannot start straight away, and even after we have succeeded in beginning, the mind is apt to slip back into its earlier and more accustomed frame, so that our efforts become intermittent. Prayer thus becomes an attempt to bring ourselves into an unusual attitude. When it is over, we feel relieved and abandon ourselves to a reaction which carries us right away from prayer. So it easily comes about that prayer becomes restricted to the allotted time, and is regarded as a thing apart. In consequence, the stated prayer becomes a duty to be " knocked off." When it is over, it is over, and we contentedly leave it. It has become a detail, an alien detail, instead of a constant occupation.

But why should it be a constant occupation ? Why should it run through the whole day ? How can we find materials for whole days of prayer ? How can we manage to carry prayer on in the midst of all our work ? It will serve our purpose best if we attack these questions by an indirect route, and begin by considering some of the reasons why we must pray. First of all, there are personal reasons. By keeping God before our minds, prayer guards us against temptation. I urge the need of this, not so much for our own sakes as for that of others. For every sin makes the world worse and hurts some one. Besides, whether we like

it or not, every Christian—like every other person—is regarded by others as an exposition of the creed in which he believes. It is terrifying to notice how often men's influence for good is spoiled by sins which they either do not notice or else regard as virtues. Some of us know the horror of suddenly perceiving that our character was being modelled on the Great Accuser instead of the Great Justifier. We need constant contact with God, and that involves recollection of God, which prayer brings about naturally. The longer I watch my own life and those of my fellow Christians, the more clearly do I see that their deepest and most permanent effects are not the direct result of deliberate actions, but are brought about by little, unconscious disclosures of Christ and of God dwelling in them. We dare not, we cannot simulate this, and we therefore ought to seek a way of letting the Divine life continually flow into us, or rather through us continually. The heart must never cease to beat with the impulse of prayer. " For their sakes I sanctify myself " is a phrase which ought to be woven into the fabric of our minds as a continually repeated pattern.

If we are to be what we ought to be to our friends, we must cultivate a right relation to them. We must see them in the light of God if we are to know them aright. If we are to be joined to them in God's love and to grow accustomed to living with them in His love, we must meet them continually in the atmosphere of God—and may I point out in passing that " the

atmosphere of God " is simply a paraphrase of " the Holy Spirit." Now no running through a list of names late at night is going to provide room for this. We have a special relationship with each person which must have its own due. The prime object of that relationship is that we should bring them into contact with God, and afford God an additional means of contact with them. They are not mere units in a crowd. Each is an individual human life and needs treating as such. Each has his own peculiar capabilities and needs his own special form of stimulus. We always tend to reduce people to types ; we have to learn to appreciate each at his full as a person. I say again that this involves our seeing them steadily and continuously in the light which God throws upon their possibilities.

Again, we must help to fight the battles of our friends, and their battles are won or lost in that inner man who lives in the inner world, to which we gain access in prayer. When we pray with them we literally take our stand by them in the spiritual world, and heart strengthens heart. But there is more than this. If we are in close touch with people, the current of their temptations flows into their minds. This is the explanation of a great deal of our difficulty in prayer. For example, sometimes we really want to pray, and we make as much effort as usual, but we find that somehow we cannot get away with it. We seem as though our limbs are loaded. The reason is that our love for them has drawn the burden of their weariness on to our

shoulders. We are walking arm-in-arm with tired men. If we would only realise how often this, and not our own feebleness, is what we are up against, we should struggle harder ; for we can persist for others, as we cannot for ourselves. Conversely, just because we are in such close contact with other people, our temptations endanger them, and must be dealt with promptly, or else we become centres of infection. At his own peril, and at the peril of his friends, each of us must learn to recollect that he is not a thing apart, but a focus of the struggle between spiritual health and disease.

Placed in the middle of a jarring world, we have to do what we can to promote God's purpose of reconciliation. He wants men to be reconciled to Him, so as to be put into a harmony which will rule all their relations with one another. Now, men must be reconciled to God in their spirits, or at least their spirits must be moved by a strong desire to be reconciled to God, before their outer nature can be reconciled to Him in any sincerity. We are doing much towards this when we bring them continually into God's company in our prayers. But we have to get rid of an obstacle in ourselves. We do not object to the forgiveness of others as a general principle, but when we come to individual cases we feel a strong repugnance to it. We are not reconciled to God's policy of loving one's enemies. Even if we do not cherish the hope that they will go on till they get themselves into real trouble, we hark back

to the idea that the whole trouble is that they will not change their minds. We forget that we need a change of mind, too. We do not realise that the forgiveness which God not only grants, but works, is not a toleration of sin, but a change from interest in sin to interest in God, a change from the bias which concentrates our attention on what is faulty to the bias which makes us attentive to all that is good. This latter tendency is deplorably rare. If it is to spread abroad we must begin its cultivation in ourselves. And the way to do so is to " pray for them that despitefully use you "—" for them," notice, not " at them." This change is not going to be achieved in the midst of a crowd of other thoughts. It needs time, and special time, for it needs determined persistence in the face of failure. It needs the definition and the comprehensiveness which can only be attained by making use of every example within our own sphere of life. Every thought of anyone who worries us, or whom we dislike, ought to be taken as a call to instant action, the action of prayer. Then and there we are face to face with the temper which makes Christianity impossible, and we must fight the wrong tendency in our own hearts. I speak, of course, only for myself, but this is the one point at which I do not borrow the words of Christ, " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I have no doubt that He knew what He was talking about better than I do. But I cannot see that the people who disgust me know not what they do. But, besides—and

this is, I think, more to the point—if I say, " Father, forgive them," I find that it fixes my attention on their sins. So, since I am keenly aware that people are apt to be what we expect of them, and because I do not want to exercise suggestion in a baneful form, I say, " Lord, bless them." I know that some people shy at this, because they have not got beyond the old tribal god who blesses people by backing them up, whatever they are or do. They are wrong. God's blessing to a liar is to make him truthful ; God's blessing to the spiteful is to make them loving.

And as we are bound to exert ourselves against the forces of division, so also we are bound to try to achieve unity. Every one of us is the meeting point of a whole complex of lives, and can therefore be a point of union. But the extent to which this comes about depends on ourselves. Our opportunities of promoting a harmonious external social life may be very limited, but we can make opportunities enough for this work by seizing passing moments to bring our friends into touch with ourselves, with one another, and with God by a vivid, if brief, realisation of the little group with Christ in its midst. To do so is to discover what is described as our conversation in Heaven and as the life of the Jerusalem which is above.

Even a person whose friends are few, if he took his position and his opportunities as seriously as this, would feel that a space or two in the course of the day was too brief a time to be sufficient, and too detached

to be effective. How much more must this be true for those who are brought into close relation with large numbers of people. Of course, whether he is dealing with large numbers or small, no man is sufficient for these things. But we ought to allow the thought of our responsibility to burn into our minds till we are fairly driven into extending our prayers towards a point at which they will permeate our every hour.

We must, therefore, learn to pray without ceasing. But how are we to attempt it. I have already suggested a partial solution. We must train ourselves to pray for each person who comes into our thoughts or whom we meet, immediately and steadily. The briefer the form of prayer the better. We are warned against depending on " much speaking." It is so easy to let prayer, if it grow wordy, become a mere soliloquy. An attempt to find appropriate words for every case is liable to fail or to become merely an intellectual game. It is far better to choose a single idea which will cover a large number of cases, embody it in a simple phrase, and stick to it—by the simple means of repeating it. The repetition of such a phrase as " Bless so-and-so," or " Glory be to Thee in so-and-so," or " Glory be to Thee in so-and-so through Jesus Christ our Lord," fixes our mind on the person and prevents our drifting aside into details. Or, because it trains us in thankfulness and also trains us to look for the work which God has already wrought, such a phrase as " Glory be to Thee for —— " or " Thanks be to God for ——" is

most useful. But we have always to remember that the words are but a means to an end, the direct contact of our hearts with God and with human souls. Just because it is so necessary that our minds be free to think clearly of these, and kept to them, it is necessary to restrict our form of words.

But I find that the use of a set phrase has a further value. What is often repeated tends to come back into our thoughts and thus suggest its own use again. Like a fragment of a song, it keeps recurring to the mind, and there never need be the slightest difficulty in finding a person's name to put to it. Even if we do not feel prayerful at the moment, a few repetitions bring the force of association to bear, and the right mood is resuscitated. The mood that is wanted is not one of passionate entreaty. That wears itself out, and, moreover, is very apt to suggest doubts which may be all the more paralysing because they are inarticulate. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." The steady murmur of a confident little prayer is far more strengthening than shouts and cries.

By such a method or prayer the work of intercession is done easily and comprehensively during the course of the day. Our evening prayers, then, need to be no more than a summing-up. Our friends have already been gathered together in our hearts and we have but to commend them finally to God.

The idea upon which many of us work is that we conclude our day with prayer. As a matter of fact, we

put our prayers very late—too late very often—but there is at least a little interval before we actually go to sleep. This is usually regarded as a time of no account, but it has been pointed out that this is entirely a mistake. It is dangerous to generalise, I know, but I have formed the opinion, and that not lightly, that what we think as we go to sleep sets the tenor of the thoughts of the following day. I take this time, therefore, for prayer about myself. I frame a little prayer for some need, or take a text embodying some thought which I want to have worked into my nature, and repeat it over and over till I go to sleep. Those who waken in a normal manner, find that if they repeat the phrase again as they are waking, it almost says itself for the rest of the day. For myself thought is very difficult when I wake. But I find it comparatively easy to revive it in the course of the morning. If it be a text, it can be used as an aspiration, or even a prayer, for others as well as oneself, and has the double value of giving a variety to one's momentary prayers, and of using the words of Scripture in the proper way, *i.e.*, as a means of getting into fuller touch with God. I do not wish to dismiss a large question in a single word, but the value, say, of one of our Lord's sayings or of a supreme prophetic phrase lies not in what it tells us, but in what it lets us see. Like all works of genius, it places us where the Seer stood, that we may feel the thing He felt. This cannot be done in a moment, but surely these priceless sentences deserve as much steady

contemplation as we would give to a great picture, and demand the same steady gaze.

It seems scarcely necessary to remark that we need to have some rough classification of groups or subjects for the days of the week, in order to secure adequate attention for the various claims on us. My reason for mentioning so obvious a device is that I should like to suggest a modification of plan which I have found advantageous. That is to go back to the old division of day from day at six in the evening (instead of midnight, or, as it really works out, at bedtime). The change of subject freshens interest, especially if we happen to be out and about at that time. The new group is comparatively fresh as well as complete by the time we come to our night prayers and is easily recalled in the morning, which is a difficult time for some of us. So we are able to begin the day among our friends and continue with them till eventide opens another page of recollection, and we begin the thought of other claims and affections with a heart which has been continually refreshed during the day.

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I little thought that I should ever come to thank God for my difficulties. But as I consider what I have written, I see that whatever usefulness it may have is due to the fact that things which appear to be easy for other people have been hard for me. I find that there are many others who have found it hard to make a

beginning, and, until better advice is offered, I submit to them the plans which I have found practicable. I venture to put forth this little book in the hope that it may help to clear the way for others to go farther than I have been able towards attaining that continuous life of prayer which will make a man a perpetual blessing to all those amongst whom he lives.

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How can I pray?

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